Musica Ecclesiastica.

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST.

BY

Thomas Kempis.

NOW FOR THE FIRST TIME SET FORTH IN RHYTHMIC SENTENCES

According to the original intention of the Author

WITH A PREFACE BY

H. P. LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L.,

Canon and Chancellor of St. Paul's

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1889a

TO

G. E. REDHEAD,

Vicar of S. Mary Magdalene's, Bradford, Yorks,

THIS

NEW SETTING OF AN OLD JEWEL

IS DEDICATED

BY

THE TRANSLATOR.

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PREFACE.

WHY is it that for the last four centuries *The Imitation of Christ* has stood higher than any other book of devotion in the heart and judgment of millions of Christians? Because, beyond any other devotional work, it seriously takes the moral teaching of our Lord in the Gospels as a rule of thought, feeling, and action. It is the fashion of our day to make much of the words of Jesus Christ, when His Divine Person, or the atoning value of His death, or the teaching of His inspired Apostles is being disparaged. But those who would thus exalt the words of Christ at the expense of other things which are assuredly dear to Him, do not know, or do not remember, the lessons which His words really teach, or what is the standard of thought, motive, and conduct which they set before us, or how exacting and peremptory they are. The author of the *Imitation* did keep this constantly in mind. He had before his eyes those searching and awful warnings,

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those piercing questionings of motive and character, those high ideals of devotion,—the counsels no less than the precepts of Christian perfection,—which are too often never read, or at any rate are seldom pondered in days of—

> "Smooth, open ways, good store;
> A creed for every clime and age,
> By mammon's touch new moulded o'er and o'er;
> No cross, no war to wage."

And therefore it is that in reading À Kempis the Christian conscience feels itself in the moral atmosphere of the Gospels. There are here no such accommodations of the words of Christ to moral situations which they cannot be made to sanction without more or less violence, as are to be met with in modern books of devotion; and we pass from his pages to those of the inspired Evangelists with less sense of a change of spiritual atmosphere than is possible in the case of any other writer. Among English books of piety, Law's *Serious Call* and Bishop Wilson's *Sacra Privata* most nearly recall the tenderness and the severity of À Kempis; but they scarcely less recall À Kempis by what they are not than by what they are.

The present translator has wisely taken advantage of the admirable Latin version of the *Imitation* which was published by C. Hirsche at Berlin in 1874. To all previous editions Hirsche's is related as a Hebrew or English edition of the Psalter which exhibits the

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parallelisms is to an edition which prints the Psalms as though they were prose. The difference is not only or chiefly one of literary form; the mind is led by the poetical arrangement to dwell with a new intelligence and intensity upon clauses and words, and to discern with new eyes their deeper meanings, their relation to each other and to the whole of which they are parts. That *The Imitation of Christ* now for the first time offered to English readers in its original form will be widely welcomed, the present writer cannot doubt.

H. P. LIDDON.

CHRIST CHURCH,
March, 1889.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.*

THERE is perhaps no name better known in the world of books than that of Thomas Kempis; yet it would puzzle most people to tell whether he lived in the thirteenth or fifteenth century, whether he was monk or layman, whether he passed a quiet or a stormy life, and what he did besides writing the book which has made his name so famous. The world of readers cares little for biography that has no scandal in it; and men pass by simple lives to read about Saint Augustine's immorality, Milton's domestic troubles, and Abelard's tragedy of love. But God carries His work on, though His workmen may be forgotten, and the pen which won an immortality by copying the *Church Music* still "works miracles, turning bitter waters into sweetness, every day."

* The Translator does not consider himself called upon to discuss the question of the authorship. In whatever way we decide it, it is certain that we owe the book in its present form to Thomas Haemmerlein.

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Let us think ourselves back into the end of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth, and with the map of Europe open before the eye of the mind, look in upon the stormy scene.

Here are the French and English flying at one another's throats, fighting the senseless Hundred Years' war. In Central Europe, Bohemia is in wild revolt to avenge the death of Huss and Jerome of Prague. The Western Church is torn by schism. One Pope is at Rome, another at Ravenna, another in France, and each one is denouncing his brothers as Antichrists; while, in the East, Constantinople is only waiting for the dreadful day when the long-watching Crescent shall become a circle round the walls, and Mahomet shall vanquish Christ in Eastern Europe, as he has already vanquished Him in Africa and in Arabia.

There is a wave of discontent everywhere rearing its crest; the clergy are ill in their lives, the laity are careless. Chaucer, the poet of the well-to-do, may pen his kindly Prologue and smile upon the vagaries of friars and monks and sompnours; but there are deeper tones to be heard from the Rectory at Lutterworth, where the Morning Star of the Reformation is ending his dauntless life over his translation of the Bible; and from the Ploughman's rugged text stand out in startling distinctness, word-

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pictures of an England just remembering that it has forgotten God.

But there was quiet here and there, and in Thomas Kempis' country of Holland the noise of the world was partly dulled. What could it matter to the Haemmerlein family at Kempen what the Popes were and did? It was enough for them to mend the shoes of Kempen, to look after the tiny scholars, and perhaps to hear Tauler the Mystic preach.

It must have been a serious home; for Thomas's elder brother, John, had gone away when quite a boy to get himself an education among the Brothers of Common Life at Deventer, a community half-lay, half-clerical, founded by Gerard Groot; and, so far as we know, his father and mother never saw the lad again. The writer of the *Church Music* was as yet a toddling child; and when the toddling child grew older, what must he do but follow in John's steps? So in 1393 Thomas presents himself in Deventer, asking for his brother John. Here at Deventer he learns Latin, perhaps Greek, a little mathematics, and a smattering of what they called philosophy, logic, and science; but he learns something more—the copying of manuscripts, in which he soon excels. The Bible and its thoughts, reverence for people in authority, simple rules for a life of hard work, purity, and holiness,—these, under

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due guidance, he also studies; for the world was not so far advanced in that century that schoolmasters and parents could afford to let a child pick up these subjects by the light of nature. Then we see him, as we should expect, ready to enter the monastery of the Brotherhood; and off he went to Mount St. Agnes, near Zwolle. But not till 1414 was he ordained a priest; he was in no hurry to take a step which he regarded as an important one. His quiet life was spent in the service of the busy monastery; he taught the young, copied MSS., dreamed wonderful dreams, and wrote book after book.

What are the words under his picture?

"IN OMNIBUS REQUIEM QUÆSIVI, SED NON INVENI NISI IN HOEXKENS ENDE BOEXKENS."

"I have sought everywhere for peace, but I have found it not save in a little nook and in a little book."

From this retreat, except for one year of persecution, he never went, and it was in his cell that the *Imitation* was copied and written out. He died at last in 1471, at the age of ninety-seven, "having fulfilled in very deed and verifying in himself what he recommended in his discourses should be done."

To understand the teaching of this "last of the Mystics" we must read the lives of Tauler and

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Ruysbroeck; but it is quite possible in a few lines to show what is the leading thought of the *Musica Ecclesiastica.*

Mysticism exists in every century and in every Church, and, stated in a word, means this: "Works in themselves are nothing; personal communion with God is everything." Eckhard, Suso, and Tauler taught that the first step towards perfection is a purification of the soul from sin; and, when this is done, there follows a complete identification of the soul with God.

It is quite a mistake to think that the continual repetition of this thought in the *Church Music* is merely due to the wild transports of the monastic cell; the man who wrote that the soul might even on earth become one with God, meant it—and believed it.

Man is God in potentiality, and may by communion with God regain his first happy state. Works are useless, ceremonies of little avail, charity but cold, if this communion with God be wanting. Thus it is that the writer of Church Music says little about the ethics of Christianity; he is the St. John of devotional literature; and he feels himself as close to Jesus as if he had once walked with Him in the cornfields, stood beside the ignominious cross, and leaned upon His breast.

It is precisely this omission of his which brings

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down upon the book the curious condemnation of Dean Milman, and which wins for it the panegyric of George Eliot. It is a record of hidden spiritual struggle, and in so far as it deals with the soul and God alone, it is separated from all creeds. Resting on them, it is above them.

Now it is well known to students that the *Church Music*, commonly called *The Imitation of Christ* (though this title is a complete misnomer), was written, not in simple prose, but in a rhythm more or less exact. Dr. Hirsche of Hamburg, who has spent many years upon a study of the text, has once more brought this fact before the world. I say "once more," because even in Kempis' lifetime people knew that the book was called *Musica Ecclesiastica*, and that it was written "metrice," or in rhythm; but succeeding centuries disregarded the melody of the Latin and the evident intention of the writer that the chapters should be learnt by heart and chanted or recited.

Very often the lines rhyme; but this appears to be more the result of the Latin inflexions than of any fixed intention. At any rate this rhyming can hardly be reproduced in English.

It has been my aim to take full advantage of this rhythmical arrangement, and to give to the public a copy of the *Church Music* which shall, as far as my English can catch the melody of the

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semi-barbarous Latin, correspond with the original. But I do not pretend that the translation is mercilessly literal.

Long words, stereotyped phrases, and theological terms which carry no fixed meaning to the reader, have been discarded in favour of simple English. But I have generally made it clear in a foot-note whenever I lay violent hands upon a time-honoured expression.

The order of the books has been altered. They are given as Thomas Kempis left them. Nobody would think of putting the book on the Communion last, if he considered for a moment the Mystic teaching. "The Warnings Useful to a Spiritual Life" (Book I.), "The Warnings to draw us to the Inward Life" (Book II.), and "A Pious Encouragement to the Holy Communion" (Book III.), lead up to the dramatic conversations between God and the faithful soul—"The Book of Inward Consolation" (Book IV.)

And, lastly, no passage has been smoothed over, toned down, or omitted, merely to suit the particular tenets of any school in the Christian Church.

Of the 1441 Codex, which is the basis of Dr. Hirsche's edition and of this translation, Bonet-Maury says: "Quum igitur teutonici et nederlandici codices nobis antiquiores esse videantur, omnes demum supereminet codex ille, qui in burgundica

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Bruxellensi bibliotheca nunc reperitur. . . . Nobis, ex omnibus indiciis, constare videtur in Antverpiensi codice certissimum integerrimumque existere textum." And he adds that if you arrange the lines as they are marked in this Codex you will be astonished at the melody, rhythm, and rhyme, as if the writer had meant it to be sung in plain-song. And he compares the form of the book with that of the Psalms and Proverbs.

I may ask any of my readers who doubt this to refer to Hirsche's "Prolegomena zu einer neuen Ausgabe der Imitatio Christi."

If the work is in any way rescued from the misunderstandings of many generations, my aim will have been accomplished. The thinking world has for ages given its imprimatur to the volume which began its world-wide journey from the cell in Mount St. Agnes. From that hill-side still rings out the Mystic's voice :—

"I will hear what the Lord God may say in me.
Blest is the soul that hears its Lord's voice speaking within it,
And takes the word of comfort from His lips.
Blest are the ears that catch the throbbing whisper of the Lord,
And turn not to the buzzings of the passing world;
That listen not to voices from without,
But to the truth that teaches from within.
Blest are the eyes
That, shut to outer things,

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Are busied with the inner life.
Blest are they who penetrate within,
And more and more by daily use
Strive to prepare themselves
To take the heavenly mysteries.
And blest are they who try to give their time to God,
And shake them free from all the burden of the world.

* * * * * *

So, all is vanity,
Save loving God and serving Him alone."

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BOOK I.

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*Here begin the "Warnings Useful to a Spiritual Life."**

* This in the MS. comes in this place, not before the list of chapters.

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CHAPTER I.

Of Imitating Christ and Scorning all the World's Vanities.

Jan. 1. "HE that followeth after Me walks not in the darkness;"
Thus saith the Lord.
These are Christ's words, and by them we are told
How far to imitate His life and ways,
If we would be truly filled with light,
And from all blindness of our hearts be set at liberty.
Therefore our study above all must be
Upon the life of Jesus Christ to ponder.

His teaching passes all the teaching of the saints,
And he who has the spirit of Christ
Would find the manna hidden there.
But it is thus, that many a man,
Hearing the Gospel ever and again,
Feels for it little longing,
Because the spirit of Christ is none of his.
Yet he who would in all their fulness
Taste and know the words of Christ,
Must study to make all his life like in its beauty unto His.

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II.

What boots it deeply of the Holy Three to talk,
If, lacking humbleness, you grieve that Holy Three?
Deep words make no man just and holy,
But lives of virtue make men dear to God.
Far rather had I feel a sorrow for my sin,
Than know the definition of the feeling;
For if in the mere letter* you should know the Bible through,
And all the sayings of the wise,
What—without love of God, without His gracious touch† —would all be worth to you?

Jan. 2. "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity,"
Save loving God and serving Him alone.
That is the best philosophy,
To scorn the world and strive to gain the kingdom in the skies.
Therefore it is but vanity to seek the riches that will fail,
And to build hopes on them.
It is but vanity to look for offices of state.
It is but vanity to raise oneself on high.
It is but vanity to follow longings of the flesh,
Panting for what must bring us heavy punishment in days to be.
It is but vanity to wish for life that shall be long,
And care but little for its being good.
It is but vanity to think alone upon the life we lead,
And not look forward to the things which are to come.
It is but vanity to love what with all speed is passing by,
And not to hasten there where joys eternal dwell.

Jan. 3. Bethink you often of the saying,
"The eye is never satisfied with what it glances at,

* Exterius. † Gratia.

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The ear is never filled with what it hears,"
And try to wean your heart from loving what you see,
And turn to what you cannot see;
For they who follow where the senses lead, will spoil the conscience,
And lose the kindly touch* of God.

CHAPTER II.

Humble Thoughts of Self.

Jan. 4. ALL men by nature dearly love to know,
But knowledge without fear of God—what is it worth?
Better indeed a humble peasant, fearing God,
Than the proud thinker who neglects himself in musing on the courses of the stars.
He that well knows himself is cheap in his own sight,
And praise from man delights him not;
For if I knew all that is in the world,
And yet were not in charity with men,
What would it profit me before my God?
He is to judge me from my actions here.

Rest, rest from this excessive longing;
In it you will but find distraction and deceit.
Gladly the men of knowledge would seem wise,
Gladly be talked of as "the learned;"
But there are many things
Of little or no profit to the soul.
Unwise indeed is he
Who turns his mind to aught
But that which serves the safety of his soul.

* Gratia.

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Much talk contents it not,
But a good life will cool the burning of the mind;
And a pure conscience
Brings us with confidence before our God.
The more you know, the better that you know it,
The sterner will the judgment be, unless your life be holy.
Then be not raised on high in pride for any skill or knowledge of your own,
But rather fear for what has been entrusted to you.

II.

Jan. 5. If you think you know much and comprehend things well,
Reflect that there is much you do not know.
Be not high-minded,
But confess your ignorance.
Why would you put yourself before another?
Many may be found more skilled than you,
Many more learned in the law;
But if you would learn something that will profit you,
Love to be all unknown, and to be held as nothing.

The deepest lesson for a man to learn is this, and the most gainful too:
Truly to know—ay and to scorn himself.
Great wisdom is it, and it makes a man far better,
To put no price upon himself,
And to think highly of his neighbour with a kindly mind.
For if you saw another sin some open sin,
Or do some grievous deed,
Think not the better of yourself for that.
How long can *you* stand straight? You cannot tell.
We all are frail;
But this must be your thought—
"None is more frail than I."

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CHAPTER III.

Truth's Teaching.

Jan. 6. HAPPY the man taught by the truth itself;
Not by the shapes and sounds that pass across his life,
But by the very truth.
Our thoughts and senses often lead us wrong;
They see one side alone.

What is the use of great disputes on what is hidden and obscure?
We shall not in the judgment day be judged because we know them not.
But it is great unwisdom that we should neglect the gainful and the needful things,
And turn our willing thoughts to what is strange and hurtful.
Eyes we have, and do not see.
Why *should* we care about scholastic terms? *

Jan. 7. The man to whom the Word Eternal speaks
Is loosened from the bonds of many theories;
For from one Word come all things,
And all things speak—one Word.
This Word is the beginning.
It also speaks to us.
Without this Word, no one can judge or think aright;
But he to whom all things are One,
And who to One brings all his questions,†
And in One sees all his answers,
Steadfast-hearted will he be,
And rest at peace in God.

O God of truth,
Make me one with Thee in eternal love.

* De generibus et speciebus.
† Et omnia ad unum trahit, et omnia in uno videt.

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Oft am I weary, reading, listening,
But all I wish and long for is in Thee.
Then silent be all teachers, hushed be all creation at the sight of Thee:
Speak Thou to me, alone.

II.

Jan. 8. The more a man is one within himself, and simple in his inner life,
The deeper and the more he understands—yet without toil.
For down from heaven there comes to him the light that brings intelligence.
A spirit simple, pure, and firm, is never wasted in a multitude of business,
Because its business is in all to honour God.
It strives to be at rest within itself from all self-seeking thoughts.
Who troubles you? who hinders you?
Naught but your heart's affection—yet unkilled.
The good and pious soul first maps out in his heart
His business in the world,
Nor does his work e'er draw him off into the longings of a wicked mind.
He bends it all to listen to his reason,—
Reason, the holy witness of his life.
Who fights a braver fight
Than he who strives to win a battle o'er himself?
This, this should be our ceaseless work,
To crush the enemy within ourselves,—
Daily to get a braver hold on him,
And win some ground upon the better path.

III.

Jan. 9. All our ideal life upon the earth
Has something unideal that clings to it,

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And no deep thoughts of ours are free from some dark mists.
The humble knowledge of yourself
Will be a surer road to God
Than a deep searching into knowledge of the world.
Yet knowledge is not to be blamed,
Nor any simple grasping of a thing.
Nay, in itself considered, it is good,
And is of God ordained;
But a good conscience and a virtuous life are ever put before it,
Still, because many rather strive to know
And not to live in holiness,
They often err,
And bring forth little fruit, if any at all.

O, if they used the care they spend upon their questions,
In rooting out their vices and in sowing seeds of virtue,
There would not be such scandals and such evils in the world,
Such careless ways within the cloister walls.

Jan. 10. But, when the day of judgment comes, we shall be asked
What we have done,—and not what we have read;
How holy were our lives,—and not how fine our words.

Tell me,
Where now may all those lords and masters be whom you knew well
While on the earth they lived,
And while they flourished in their learning?
Their prebends others hold;
I cannot tell if they think once of them.
In life it seemed that they were something great,
And now none speaks of them.
How fast, how fast the glory of the world flits by.

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I would their lives had balanced with their knowledge;
Then good had been their studies and their books.
How many perish by vain learning in the world,
That care too little for the service of their God.
They vanish into shadows, while they meditate,—
Because they make their choice for greatness, not for lowliness of mind.
Truly great is he,
Who has great charity.
Truly great is he,
Who in himself is small,
And holds as naught all heights of honour.
Truly wise is he,
Who deems all earthly things as dung,
That he may win the prize of Christ.
Truly learned too is he,
Who does God's will,
Letting his own will go.

CHAPTER IV.

Prudence in what we have to do.

Jan. 11 WE must not credit every word and every rising thought,
But with care and patience we must weigh a matter as it is with God.
Oh, (it is sad) more readily we speak, more readily believe,
Ill of another rather than good;
So weak are we.
But good men do not lightly credit every teller of a tale,
Because they know that human weakness is so prone to ill,
And apt enough to stumble through the tongue.

II.

Great wisdom is it
Not to run headlong on in what we have to do,

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Nor to stand obstinately fixed in our decisions.
It is a part of wisdom, too, not to believe any and every word of man,
Nor soon to pour into another's ear what we have heard or credited.
Take counsel with the wise, with those whom conscience rules,
And seek instruction from a better man than you,
Rather than follow up your own discoveries.

The good life makes man wise, as God would have him wise,
Cunning in much.
The humbler one is in himself, and the more subject unto God,
The wiser will he be in all, the more at peace.

CHAPTER V.

Reading Holy Writ.

Jan. 12. IN Holy Writ we must seek truth,
Not eloquence;
And in the spirit in which all holy writing was once made,
In that must it be read.
Use we should look for there,
Not subtle talk.

II.

We should be just as glad to read simple and pious books,
As deep ones and profound.
Let it not trouble you whether the writer be of weight or no,
Whether his name be great or small,

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But let the love of simple truth draw you to read your book.
You must not ask who said it,
But what is said—attend to that.
God's truth remains for ever though men pass away,
And, without caring for the person of the writer,
God speaks to us in many ways.

III.

Jan. 13. Often in reading Holy Writ curious thoughts obstruct our path;
We wish to understand and argue, where we should pass by.
If you would drink a profitable draught,
Read with humility,
With simpleness and faith,
And never long to gain the name of "wise."
Ask your questions freely,
And hear the words of holy men—not answering them.
And be not grieved by parables from older men;
Not without reason are they put before you.

CHAPTER VI.

Unbridled Longings.

Jan. 14. WHEN we desire a thing in an unbridled way,
We are at once unrestful in ourselves.
The proud and covetous are never still;
The poor and lowly-minded spend their days
In peace that never fails.

II.

The man who is not yet quite dead within himself
Is quickly tried:
In little worthless things he is defeated.

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He that is weak in spirit, and in a way slave to the flesh,
leaning to things of sense,
Can hardly steal himself away from earthly longings,
And when he does he is but sad,
Easily angered if a man withstands him.
Yet if he gain his end,
At once his conscience rises to accuse him;
He is cast down because he followed where his passions led,
Passions that aid him not to gain the longed-for rest.

III.

So by resisting passion,
Not by bowing to it like a slave,
The true heart's peace is found.
Therefore peace has no being in the heart of carnal man,
Given up to earthly things,
But in the burning spiritual soul.

CHAPTER VII.

Flight from Vain Hopes and Boastful Pride.

Jan 15. VAIN is he
Who puts his trust in man or in created things.
Blush not to serve your neighbour for the love of Christ,
Nor blush at seeming needy in this world of time.

You must not stand upon yourself,
But rest your hope in God.
Do what you can,
And God will help you if your will be good.

You must not trust in knowledge of your own,
Or to the cleverness of any man that lives,

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But rather in the gracious touch* of God,
Who helps the lowly and brings down to lowliness them
that count upon themselves.

II.

Boast not in riches if you have them,
Nor in your friends that they are high in power;
But boast in God, Who gives you all,
And longs to give you, with all other things—Himself.

Pride not yourself on height or beauty,
Spoilt and made ugly by a touch of sickness.

Be not so glad about your cleverness or wit,
Lest you displease your God,
To Whom your natural goodness all belongs.

Jan. 16. Think not yourself a better man than others,
Lest you be thought (may be) a worse one in God's sight.
He knows what lies in man.

And be not proud of your good works;
God's judgments differ far from men's;
And, when men smile, He often frowns.
If you have any good in you
Believe still better things of other men.
This is the way to keep your lowly heart.
It hurts you not to place yourself behind all other men,
But it does harm you sorely
To push yourself even in front of one.
Peace lives ever with the lowly;
But in the proud man's heart,
Envy, and constant wrath.

* Gratia.

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CHAPTER VIII.

Beware of being Too Familiar.

Jan. 17. YOU must not take the covering from your heart for every one,
But tell your case unto the wise God-fearing man.
Only now and then be with the young or with the people of the outer world.
When with the rich, refuse to flatter them,
And do not hurry to appear before the faces of the great.
Make to you friends of the simple and the lowly,
The pious and obedient folk,
And talk of what will build the palace of the soul.
For women—be not intimate with any,
But commend all good women to your God.

II.

Only with God and with His angels long to be intimate,
And shun man's notice.
Kind you must be towards all,
But intimacy is not good.
Often we see
How a great name will make some unknown person glitter,
And yet his actual presence throws a shadow on the light
For them that look on him.
Sometimes we think to please another by our company,
But we displease him by the unholy character he sees in us.

CHAPTER IX.

Obedience and Subjection.

Jan. 18. SURELY it is a great thing to stand and live obedient Under superiors,
And not to be a law unto oneself.

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Far safer standing in a lowly place
Than in a prelacy.

Many there are that live obedient lives; they must do so—they love it not.
They meet their punishment; they murmur over all,
And never will they get a soul at liberty,
Till for God's sake they bow themselves in lowliness with all their hearts.
You may run here, you may run there,
And you will find no rest save in a lowly humbleness
Beneath the rule of him that is set over you;
And dreams of place and power and change of station
Have been false guides to more than one.

II.

True, everyone would like to act according to his will,
And rather turns to those who think with him.
But if God be in our midst,
Now and again we must give up our wills to win the charms of peace.

Who is so wise
That he can know the universe in all its fulness?
Then listen readily unto another's thought,
Trust not too deeply in your own.

Though your own wish be good,
Yet if for God's sake you will lay it down
To follow in another's steps,
You will get greater good from that.
I have been often told,
"Safer to hear than to advise,
Safer to listen."

Ay, it may happen, too,
That each man's wishes may be good enough;

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But to refuse to listen to another,
When reason or the case demands it,
Is the mark of wilfulness and pride.

CHAPTER X.

Shunning Excess in Talk.

Jan. 19. AS far as may be, shun the noisy throngs of men,
For talk about the doings of the present world hinders you much,
Simple though the motive be.
For we are spotted soon by vanity, and soon enslaved.
O that I had oftener held my peace
And been away from men.

II.

But why are we so glad to talk and take our turns to prattle,
When so rarely we get back to the stronghold of our silence
With an unwounded conscience?
We are so glad to talk
Because we look for comfort each from one another's words,
Because we long to ease the heart weighed down by many a fancy,
And we are very prone to speak of what we love and long for,
Or of all the things we think are going against us.
But, sad to say,
Our talk is often empty, often vain.
This comfort from without
Is no small enemy to that from God which speaks to us within.

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III.

So we must watch and pray,
For fear our days go idly by.
If you may talk and it be best for you,
Talk and build up the soul;
But evil habit, and carelessness about our path,
Make us neglect the doorway of the mouth.
Yet holy communing about the things of God leads us no little way along the spiritual road,
And most of all when man meets man
Like to himself in heart and mind, like to himself—in God.

CHAPTER XI.

How to gain Peace and Earnestness upon our Way.

Jan. 20. WE might have peace, great peace,
If we would not load ourselves with others' words and works,
And with what concerns us not.
How can he be long at rest
Who meddles in another's cares,
And looks for matters out of his own path,
And only now and then gathers his thoughts within him?

Blest are the simple-minded;
Peace in abundance shall be theirs.

Why were certain of the saints so good in life, so deep in thought?
Because they tried to make themselves as dead to all the longings of the world,
And thus with all the marrow of their hearts they clave to God,
And could find time to muse upon themselves.

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Jan. 21 We are too busy with the sufferings of our lives;
We are too careful of the transitory world;
We rarely utterly defeat one sin;
We do not burn to hurry forward on our daily road;
So we stay, lukewarm—or else, cold.

If we were wholly dead unto ourselves,
And if our inner life were less enmeshed,
We then could taste the gifts of God,
And catch some glimpses of the sight of heaven.

Our whole, our greatest hindrance, this.
We are not free from passions and from lusts,
Nor do we try to enter on the footsteps of the saints.
For when a little trouble faces us
We are too soon cast down,
And turn for comfort to our fellow-men.

II.

Jan. 22. But if we strove to stand in battle line like soldiers true,
Above us we should see God's help descending from the sky.
Ready is He to help all those that fight,
And build their hopes upon His kindliness.
He *makes* for us chances to fight—that we may win.

If we but mark our path by all the outward rules we keep,
Soon will our devotion find its goal.
But let us "lay the axe unto the root,"
To purge ourselves from passion, and to gain the treasure of a mind at peace.

If every year we would root out one fault,
Soon we should be perfect men.
But often it is just the opposite. We find

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That we were better, purer men when we set out towards
God,
Than when for many a year we had professed our love.

Our steps should daily further go, our love should
brighter burn;
But now we think it a great thing
If any one can keep a spark of the first fire.

If at the first we would but be a little hard upon our sins,
Then we could master everything in after days
With ease and cheerfulness of heart.
Hard is it to throw off our custom's chain,
And harder still to go against our wishes.
Yet if you vanquish not the slight and little sins,
When will you overcome the greater ones?
Unlearn the evil habit,
Stand up against your bent at first,
Lest the little greater grow, and make things harder for
you still.
I fancy you would be more eager on your heavenly path,
Did you but think what rest to your own life
What joy to others you would bring
By a firm hold upon yourself.

CHAPTER XII.

"*The Uses of Adversity.*"

Jan. 23. USEFUL it is for man sometimes to meet trouble and
care opposing him,
Calling him back to his own heart,
That he may know himself a stranger in the land,
That he may place no hope in aught upon the earth.

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Useful it is for man to suffer contradiction
(Though he does well, means well),
When men think ill of him, or know but half the truth.
These are the guides that lead to lowliness,
That shield him from vainglory;
For then, when outwardly men hold us cheap,
When they will hear no good of us,
Clearer we look towards God, the inner witness of our deeds.
A man should root himself in God—so fixedly
As not to need consoling words from men.

II

Jan. 24. A man (who means to do so well),
When scourged by evil thoughts, harrowed and tried,
Can see more clearly that *he must have God*,
Can grasp that without God he can do nothing good.

Then he is sad, he moans, he prays,
By reason of his misery.
Weary of longer life,
He sighs for death to come,
To be dissolved and be with Christ.
And then he fully learns
That in the passing world full peace and perfect safety
cannot long abide

CHAPTER XIII.

Meeting Temptations.

Jan. 25. SO long as in this world we live,
We cannot be untempted and unscourged;
Wherefore in Job we read
That life of man upon the earth means trial.
So every man should in his prayers keep watch

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To meet temptations that he knows are his,
For fear the devil, never slumbering,
But going up and down in quest of men he may devour,
Find a weak place to cheat him in.
None so holy, none so good,
As not to meet temptation now and then;
We cannot quite be free.

II.

Jan. 26. Yet there are trials (hard and troublesome, may be)
Very useful unto men;
For, meeting them,
We are brought low, made pure, made wise.

All saints have gone through many a trouble,—many a harrowing care
Gone through with gain;
And those that could not bear them—
They have deserted God, and failed.*

III.

No order is so holy, and no spot so hidden,
That troubles and temptations may not come.
Long as he lives, man is not safe from them,
Because the root whence the temptation comes lies in himself.
For we were born in lust.
One trial or one sorrow ebbs away; another takes its place;
And we shall always find something to bear,
Since man has lost the blessing of his happy state.†

IV.

Jan. 27 Many try to shun their trials;
Deeper is their fall.

* Reprobi facti sunt. † That is, in Paradise.

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By flight alone we cannot win,
But by longsuffering and true lowliness we get braver than our foes.

He who only shuns them outwardly
Will make but little way;
Nay, sooner will they come again at him,
And he will feel them worse.

By slow degrees,
By patience and long waiting of the soul, God helping, you will win
Better than by severity and your own restless ways.
Receive men's counsel often in the day of trial,
And deal not grievously with them that are in woe,
But pour consoling balm upon the wound,
As you would wish done even to you.

A wavering mind, a want of trust in God,
Begins the call to evil;
For, as a ship without a helm is driven of the waves now here, now there,
So the careless man is tried that lays aside his plan of life.

v.

Jan. 28 Fire proves the iron,
And trial proves the good.
Often we know not what our powers may be,
But trial shows us what we really are.

Yet must we keep a careful watch to meet the first approach,
For then an enemy is vanquished with more ease;
If we will give no entrance at the gateway of the mind,
But meet him at his knock beyond the lintel of the door.
And one has said,

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"Withstand disease's onslaught at the gate,
The leech's after-thought may be too late."
For first upon the mind the simple thought beats in,
Then comes the stronger picture of the sin,
Then comes delight in it, and then
We basely meet it and we yield.
And thus by slow degrees the wicked foe gets in with all his power,
If at the first he finds no enemy;
And he who lazily puts off the fight becomes
Weaker and weaker every day;
Stronger and stronger is his foe.

VI.

Jan. 29. Some meet their heaviest trials at the first
Along the pathway of their road to God.
Some at the ending of the way.
Some too are visited, it seems, through all their lives,
Some lightly tried enough,
As God in wisdom and in justice wills,
Who weighs what each man is, what each deserves,
And from of old ordains all things that work the safety of His own.

Therefore we ought not to despair when tried,
But raise a brighter flame of prayer continually to God,
That He will deign to help us in all our harrowing cares,
For, in the words of Paul, He "will provide
Along with trial, an escape
To make it possible for us to bear it.

Humble your souls then 'neath the hand of God
In every trial and in every woe.
The lowly-minded He will raise—will save.
In trials and in cares the progress of the man is shown;

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In them his greater merit lies,
In them his virtue shows itself the clearer.
And it is nothing much,
If we be holy, if we burn in love, when there is no trouble at the heart;
But if a man bears up when things are all against him,
There will be hope that he has made great steps upon the road.

Jan. 30. From great temptations some are guarded safely,
And in the petty troubles of the day often cast down.
And why?
That they may be brought low,
And in great dangers never trust themselves,
Who in such nothings show how weak they are.

CHAPTER XIV.

Shun passing a Rash Sentence upon Men.

Jan. 31. TURN on yourself your eyes,
Beware of judging others' deeds.
We toil in vain in passing sentence upon men;
We often make mistakes,
Sin easily;
But if we judge ourselves and look within ourselves we always work with profit to the soul.

II.

Just as we have a thing at heart,
So do we often judge of it.
We lose the power of judging true because we love a thing.
But if in our desire we only aim at God,
We shall not be so easily confounded "when our will's gainsaid."

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But often something lurks within,
Or even falls upon us from without,
That drags us with it in its train.

Many there are, that secretly in all they do seek their own good;
They know it not.
They seem to stand at peace,
When all chimes with their wishes and their thoughts,
But if a thing be other than they like,
At once they are disturbed and sad.

III.

Feb. 1. As between friends and townsfolk quarrels come,
Because men's wishes and opinions are so many,
So with the pious and devout.
An ancient custom is so hard to leave,
And none is willing to be led
Farther than himself can see.
If you lean more on your own brain, on your own work,
Than on the conquering power of Jesus Christ,
Rarely and slowly will the light illumine you;
For God would have us wholly slaves to Him,
Soaring in burning love above the realms of brain.

CHAPTER XV.

Deeds done in Charity.

Feb. 2. NEVER, to win the love of any,—
Never, to gain an end in life,
May evil deeds be done;
But for the profit of the poor
Your works of good may freely now and then be stayed,
Or changed to works of better sort;

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For then your good work is not ruined,
Only improved.
No outward work avails, if charity be absent,
But all that in the name of charity is done—
Never so little, never so trivial though it be—
Is wholly fruitful;
Since God weighs more the means whereby you do your work,
Than what you do.
Great is his work whose love is great,
Great is his work whose work is truly done,
Good is his deed
Who serves the common good, not his own will.

II.

Feb. 3 We often call it charity,
And it is only longing of the flesh;
For man's own bent,
And man's own will,
Man's hope of gain,
Man's love of ease,
Are rarely absent from his deeds.

He that has true and perfect charity
Seeks self in nothing;
But ever unto God alone desires the glory to be done.
He envies none,
Because he loves no joys of his own heart;
Nor in himself would he rejoice,
But above every blessing longs to be at peace in God;
Attributing no good to any man,
He turns it all to Him,
From Whom as from a fount flows everything,—
In Whom, as their last end, the saints take up their rest in joy.

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If he had but one spark of the real charity,
A man would feel at once that all the things of earth are full of vanity.

CHAPTER XVI.

Bearing with the Weaknesses of Others.

Feb. 4. ALL that you cannot better in yourself or in the lives of others,
You must patiently endure,
Till God ordains a change.
And think that it is better thus,—perchance to try your patience and to prove you;
For without proof and patience man's own worth
Must weigh but lightly in the scale.
Yet under hindrances like these you ought to pray to God
To give you help
To bear them with a quiet mind.

And if you warn a man once and again, and yet he listens not,
Strive not against him;
Trust him in all to God,
That His own pleasure may be done in all His servants' lives.
Skilful is He to turn the evil into good.

II.

Feb. 5. Try and be patient, then,
In bearing others' failings and infirmities,
Be they what they may;
For *you* have many a failing
Which other men must needs endure;

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And if you do not make *yourself* all that you wish,
How *can* you bring another to your will?

We would have others saints,
And yet we do not root our failings out;
We would have others sternly blamed,
And yet we love not to be blamed ourselves;
Displeased we are when others have free scope to act,
And yet we would not be refused in anything we ask for;
We would have others bound by laws,
And yet in no case can *we* bear a bond too close.

Thus it is plain how rare it is for us to weigh our neighbours
In the same balance with ourselves.

III.

Were all men saints,
What would be left for us to bear
At others' hands to please our God?
But now has God ordained
That we should learn to carry each the burden of another.
None is without his failings,
None without his burden,
None strong enough for his own needs,
None wise enough.
We take our turns to lift the burden from each other,
We take our turns to comfort and console,
To help, to counsel, and to teach.

And each man's work
Shows clearer in the days when men oppose him.
These days make no man frail;
They only point to him,
"There is *the man*."

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CHAPTER XVII.

Life in the Monastery.

Feb. 6. NEEDS must you learn to break yourself in pieces many a time,
If you would be at rest with other men,
And have your heart knit unto theirs.
No little thing it is to dwell with monks or in a brotherhood,
And there pass in and out without a word of blame,
And faithfully live out your life even to death.
Blessed is he who in one spot has lived a life of good,
And gathered up the fragments of his days in happiness.*

If you would stand as you should stand,
If you would tread where you should tread,
Then must you think yourself a banished man, a wanderer on the earth;
If you would lead a holy life,
You must be thought a fool for Christ.
Little the profit in the gown or shaven head;
It is the change of life that makes us holy,
The passions killed never to rise again.

II.

Feb. 7. He who seeks aught but God alone,
And safety for his soul,
Will find but grief and tribulation here;
Nor can that man stand long in peace
Who will not try to be the least,
And servant unto all.

It is for service you are here;
Not for a throne.

* Et feliciter consummaverit.

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You have been called, you know, to suffer and to work,
And not to gossip and to doze.
As in the burning furnace gold is tried,
Here are men tried;
And no one's feet are firm,
Unless with all his heart he strives to live
Willingly humble for the love of God.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Examples set us by the Holy Fathers.

Feb. 8. LOOK on the vivid patterns set us by the saints,
In whom religion and true holiness
Shone like a beacon-light.
What then is all *we* do?—
Trivial or naught.
What is this life of ours,
Put against theirs?

Behold the saints, the friends of Christ,
Serving the Lord in hunger and in thirst,
In nakedness and cold,
In hours of watchfulness and days of fast,
In prayer and holy thought,
In many insults and in persecution.
How great the ills they suffered, and how many,—
Apostles, Martyrs, Virgins, and Confessors,
And all who wished to follow in the steps of Christ;
For in this world they hated their own souls,
That they might keep them to eternal life.

Feb. 9. How strict, how self-forgetful were the lives
The holy fathers in the desert lived;
How long the trials they went through, how stern;

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How often they were troubled by the foe,
How frequent and how burning were the prayers
They offered up to God;
How hard their fasts,
How great the zeal and love upon their holy path,
How brave the fight they fought to tame the spirit of its faults,
How pure and straight their aim upon their way to God.

By day they toiled,
By night they kept time free for lengthened orisons,
And even while they toiled they never stopped the mental prayer;
All their days passed usefully,
Every hour seeming too short for God;
And for the great delight in meditation,
The body's wants were often clean forgotten.

All wealth and dignity,
All honours, friends, and kinsfolk they renounced;
They longed for nothing from the world,—
Scarce did they take necessities for life,
Grieving to serve the body even in its needs.
So they were poor in earthly riches,—poor to the world outside,
But they were very rich in grace and virtue,
Refreshed within with grace and comfort from on high.

Strangers to the world,
They were neighbours and familiar friends to God.
To themselves they seemed as nothing,
Of this world they were despised
But they were rare and lo ly in the eyes of God.
They lived in true humility·
Simply obedient,

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They walked in patience and in charity,
And therefore every day they profited upon the spiritual road,
And gained great grace with God.

They have been given for a guide to all monastic life,
And rather should we follow them to good,
Than let the army of the weak make us of feeble heart.

II.

Feb. 10. Think of the zeal in all monastic life,
When first its holy institution was begun;
Think of their holy prayers,
And how they rivalled one another in the goodness of their lives;
Think of the discipline that flourished like a plant;
Think of the widespread reverence and respect,
Beneath the rule of those set over them.
The traces of their footsteps left behind them
Yet witness to these holy men,
That fought so stout a fight and trampled on the passing world.

Yet now we deem him great
Who does not break the monastery rule,
And can with patience bear
The yoke he took upon himself.
Woe to our lukewarm ways, and woe to our neglect
That we so soon cool down from our first zeal;
That, tired and chill,
We are even weary of our lives.

You who have seen many a pattern set by pious lives,
O that you may not wholly slumber in your wish
To walk upon the better path.

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CHAPTER XIX.

The Duties of a Good Man in a Brotherhood.

Feb 11. A GOOD man's life in a monastic house should gleam with every virtue,
That he may be, within,
What outwardly he seems to man to be.
And with good reason should his inner life
Be far more than we see outside;
For He Who looks within our life is God,
Whom above all we ought to reverence,
Walking beneath His gaze
As do the angels—pure.

With each fresh day we should renew the purpose set before us,
And rouse ourselves to zeal,
As if to-day for the first time we came into our newer life;
And say,
"Help me, O Lord my God, in this my purpose,
And in my holy service;
Grant me to-day to go on well,
For all I have yet done is naught."

As our plans are, so is the road of our success,
And he that would succeed must needs work hard.

But if the man who maps a brave course out
Is often found to fail,
What will he do who plans but now and then,
Or plans but languidly?
In many a way we leave the plans we have laid down,
But every time we pass a holy practice by we feel some loss.

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The plans of good men rest more on God's touch than on any wisdom of their own.
In Him they always trust.
For man lays plans,
God scatters them;
Man's purpose is not His.

Feb. 12. If out of pity, or to do a brother good,
We sometimes leave one of our practices,
Some other time we can with ease recover what is gone.
But if we lightly let it go for weariness or carelessness,
Then it is very wrong,
And we shall feel the harm.

Much as we try,
We yet shall soon give way in many a thing;
But we should always lay a certain plan before us,
And most of all against those things that stop us in our way.

II.

Feb. 13 Our outer and our inner life must both be closely watched and ordered,
For both are useful to us on our path.

If you cannot always bring your thoughts to one,
Sometimes at all events you may;
Say once a day at least,
At morning or at eventide.
At morning lay your plans,
At eventide search through your ways,—
What you have said this day,
What done, what thought;
For more than once you may have sinned
Against your neighbour and your God.

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Gird you like a man against the devil's villainies.
First bridle appetite,
And you will with greater ease tighten the rein on every longing of the flesh.
Never be wholly idle,
But read or write or pray or muse,
Or do some useful work for all.
Yet penance of the body must be used with care;
It is not to be laid on everyone.

Feb. 14. Penance not laid on all
Must not be shown outside your cell.
It is your own, and safer done apart from men.
Yet you must not be slow to share the common penances,
And quick to fly unto your own;
But, having wholly, faithfully fulfilled
All that is ordered and enjoined on you,
If *then* you are at leisure,
Turn your thoughts upon yourself,
Just as your devotion would.

All cannot have one practice;
One penance is for one, one for another,
And even different times have different penances.
Some please us best on holy days,
Some in the quiet week-days of our lives.
Some we want in times of trial,
Some in days of peace and rest.
Some things we love to think on in our hours of gloom,
Some when we are joyful in the Lord.

But on high festivals we should renew
Each penance that is good,
And with greater zeal we should implore
Prayers from the saints,

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Laying our plans from one feast to another,
As though we were upon that day to take our flight out of this passing world
To an eternal holy-day.
Therefore we ought with care at pious times to make ourselves the readier,
Live holier lives,
Keep closer watch on every deed,
As though we soon from God's hands should receive
The meed for all our toil.

And, if that day be long,
We must believe we are not ready yet,
We are not worthy yet to feel "the greatness of the glory
That will shine out in our own selves at the appointed time when the veil is drawn away,"
And we must try to make ourselves more ready for the journey home.
"Blessed the servant,"
Says the gospel-writer Luke,
"Whom his master shall find watching when he comes.
I say to you
That over all his goods he will appoint him lord."

CHAPTER XX.

Love of Solitude and Silence.

Feb. 15. SEEK a fit time to be at leisure for yourself,
And often think on the kind deeds of God.
Leave your curious questionings;
Read and re-read the things that bring no busy thoughts,
But sorrow for your sins.

If you can tear yourself away from useless talk,

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And idly going here and there,
From hearing all the gossip and the news,
You will find time enough, and time well-fitted too,
To muse on what is good.

The greatest saints avoided, when they could,
Solace from men,
And chose to serve God in the cell.

And one has said,
"Often as I walked with men,
Less of a man did I return."
Again and yet again we see,
When we keep chattering,
That it is easier wholly to be dumb
Than not to step beyond the line in talk;
That it is easier to stay quietly at home
Than to keep guard over ourselves abroad.

He then who would attain the inner holier life
Must draw away, as Jesus did, a little from the crowd.

II.

Feb. 16. No man is safe walking abroad,
Unless he loves obscurity at home.
No man is safe in speech,
Unless he loves the quiet tongue.
No man is safe in power,
Unless he loves the lower place.
No man is safe in places of command,
Unless the lesson of obedience is learnt.
No man is safe in joy,
Unless he have within a conscience that is good,
The witness of his life.

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Yet mark. This safety of the saints existed not
Without a thorough fear of God,
And no less anxious, no less humble, were they in themselves
For all the shining glory of their virtues and their grace.
But for the fancied safety of the bad,
It springs from self-conceit and pride,
And at the last it turns and proves,
Even to itself, how false it is.

Feb. 17. Brother, good as you may seem,—
Hermit, pious as you are,—
Never in this life boast yourself that you are safe;
For often those who stood high in the thoughts of men
Have been in graver peril from their very confidence.
So it does good to many a man
Not to go scot free of trials,
But that they often should assault the fortress of the soul;
For fear men get too sure,
For fear men be set high upon the towers of pride,
For fear they turn too lightly
To the consoling voices from without.

III.

Feb. 18. O if a man would never seek the joys that pass so quickly by,
If he would never worry with the world,
How good his inward heart would be;
If he would cut but clean and deep
Into the wound of empty cares,—
If he would only think of what is wholesome
And of what comes from heaven,—
If he would lay the corner-stone of all his life in God,
How great would be the treasure of his peaceful rest.

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No one deserves comfort from heaven
Unless he diligently practises a holy sorrow for his sin.
Then if you would be sorry in your heart,
In with you to your cell;
Bar out the tumult of the world:
As it is written,
"At your bedside bemoan your sin."

Feb. 19. And there shall meet you in your cell
What you will often lose outside its walls.
Your cell, if you are often there, grows sweet to you;
If you but rarely stay, it makes you loathe it.
If when at first you turn to God you do but live within your cell and keep to it,
Soon shall it be to you a darling mistress,
Loveliest solace of your life.
'Tis in the silent quiet hour the pious soul steps forward on its path,
Learning the secrets of the written Word of God,
Finding tears in rivers night by night,
Wherewith to wash itself to purity,
Wherein to get the closer to its Maker,
As it gets farther off from all the bustle of the ages.
If man but weans himself from friends and those he knows,
God and His holy angels will draw near.

IV.

Feb. 20. Better to live a hidden life
And to take thought about oneself,
Than to work miracles and leave oneself untended.
To go abroad but now and then,
To shun publicity,—
Ay, even not to wish to see the face of man,
All this is to be praised in one who takes the vows.

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Why wish to see
What one must not have?
The world goes by, and all the lust for it.
The wishes of our sensual nature draw us on to roam abroad,
But when the hour is gone,
What can we carry back?
A conscience heavy and a heart disturbed.

The merry visit often brings the sad return,
The merry watch kept up till late makes the morning dark.
So every fleshly joy comes with a smiling face,
But at the last it bites and kills.

What is there in the outer world that you find not in your cell?
Here you have heaven and earth
And all that goes to make up life;
For from heaven and earth all things were made.

What can you see as you look round
That can remain for long under the sun?
You think perhaps you will be satisfied;
You cannot gain this goal.
If you could see all things that are,
What would they be? "The baseless fabric of a vision."*

Feb. 21. Then lift your eyes unto your God on high,
And pray against your sins and all you leave undone.
Throw vanity to vanity,
But, as for you, mind you the precepts of your God.
Go in and bar your door
And call upon your loved one, "Jesus, come to me."
Stay in your cell with Him;

* Quid esset nisi visio vana?

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Elsewhere you will not find such rest.
Had you not left your cell,
Had you not heard a whisper from the gossip of the world,
You would have been more restful;
But if you love now and again to hear the talk of men,
Your heart will have to bear its stormy hour.

CHAPTER XXI.

Heart-Sorrow.

Feb 22. IF you would do any good,
Keep in the fear of God;
And do not wish to be too free,
But discipline your feelings, hold them down,
And do not give yourself to silly mirth.
Give yourself over to heart-sorrow,
And you will find devotion there.
Sorrow is the key to many a blessing,
Which a divided heart will soon destroy.

Is it not strange,
That man can ever in this life be wholly happy,
If he but ponders on his exiled state,
And muses on the many perils to his soul?
But we are so light of heart,
We think so little of our own shortcomings,
That we feel not the sorrows of the soul,
But, when we really ought to weep,
Then comes the empty laugh.
No liberty is real,
And no joy is true,
Save in the fear of God and in a consciousness of right.

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Happy the man who can cast off the burden of distracting cares,
And gather up the fragments of his thoughts to one—
A holy sorrow for his sin.
Happy the man who drives away from him
All that can weigh upon or stain his better self.

II.

Feb. 23. Fight like a man,
Good habits overcome the bad.

If you could let men go their way,
They will let you go yours.
Then drag not others' matters on yourself,
And do not wrap yourself in greater men's affairs,
But always keep your eye first on *yourself*,
And give your warnings to *yourself*, not to all those you love.

You may not have fair words from men; be not so sad for that,
But that you do not live a life careful or good enough,
As fits God's servant and a pious soul,
This should be a grief to you indeed.
Often men find it better, safer far,
Not to have many comforts in this life,
And least of all the comforts of the flesh;
But that we have not comforts from on high,
Or if we only feel them now and then,
We are to blame;
We do not seek heart-sorrow,
Nor do we cast aside the empty consolation of the outer world.

Know that you deserve no comfort from on high,
But rather tribulation;

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Yet when a man is wholly sorry for his sin,
Then the whole world is as a burden to him, and a bitter draught.

III.

Feb. 24. The good man finds enough for mourning and for tears,
Whether he muses on himself
Or ponders on the lives of those about him.
He knows no man lives here quite free from piercing care,
And the closer that he looks upon himself,
The greater is his moan.

Matter enough for grief and sorrow from within are all the sins and faults,
Wherein we lie so tangled,
That we can rarely see the things of heaven.

Did you but oftener muse upon your death
Than on the length of life,
You would improve with greater zeal.
If in your heart of hearts you would but weigh hell's future torments, purgatory's pains,
I fancy you would willingly endure labour and grief,
And you would shrink from no stern rule;
But since these thoughts never get down into the heart,
Since we still cling to siren pleasures,
We stay quite cold, quite dull.

Feb. 25. It is because our spirit is so miserably poor
That the wretched body so easily laments.
Pray then humbly to your God
To give to you a spirit of repentance,
And with the prophet say,
"Feed me, O Lord, with bread of mourning,
And give me plenteousness of tears to drink."

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CHAPTER XXII.

Thoughts on the Misery of Man.

Feb 26. WHERE'ER you are, where'er you turn, you are but miserable,
Save when you turn to God.

Why so dismayed
When things succeed not with you as you dearly wish?
Who is there that has all things just to suit his will?
Not I, not you,
Nor any living man.
No one without some grievous care and some distress lives in the passing world,
King though he be or pope.
Who has the better lot?
The man who can bear anything for God.

Feb. It is the talk of poor weak-minded souls to say,
"See you that man? How good his life,
How rich, how great, how high, how strong."
But turn your eyes to what is rich in heaven,
And you will see that all this trash of time is naught,
Quite unsafe, and only burdensome;
For it is never held apart from anxious thought and care.
Man's happiness does not consist
In the abundance of the things of time;
A little is enough for him.

Life on the earth is misery indeed.
The more a man longs for a higher life,
The greater is the bitterness of this,—
More clearly does he see, more plainly feel,
The want and the corruption of humanity.

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We eat, we drink,
We sleep, we watch,
We rest, we work,
We yield to all the other debts that nature makes us pay.
All this is misery and sorrow to the pious soul,
Who longs to be quite free, untrammelled by a sin.
His inward heart is much disturbed
By all the body's needs here in the world;
Whence comes the prophet's pious prayer
To be far from them as he may:
"Tear me away from my necessities, O Lord."

Feb. 28 & 29. But woe to them who know not their own misery;
And woe, worse woe to those who love this life,
So wretched, and so ready to decay;
For some hug life to them so close,
That, could they scarcely get enough to eat
By begging or by work,
If they could only live on here for ever,
They would care nothing for God's kingdom.
Fools and faithless in your hearts,
So deeply sunk in earthly things,
That you taste nothing save the flesh;
But at the last you wretched men will feel it heavily,
How cheap and worthless are the things that you have loved.

But saints of God and all the pious friends of Christ
Cared not for all that pleased the flesh,
Cared not for all that flourished in this passing time,
But all their thoughts and all their hopes panted for the everlasting good,
All their desires were lifted up, high up to what lasts long, to what men cannot see.

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That by the love of all they saw they might not be drawn down into the depths.

Mar. 1. My brother, lose not heart, in going on upon your spiritual path;
There still is time: you have an hour,
Why will you so put off your plans for good?
Rise and at once begin,
And say,
"Now is the time to act,
Now is the time to fight,
Now is the time to make myself a better man."

When you are in trouble and in woe,
Then is the time to win your crown;
Through fire and water you must pass,
Till you come out into a cooler land;
And, save you act with violence,
You will not crush your sin.

Mar. 2. As long as we have with us this weak mortal frame,
Sinless we cannot be,
Nor can we live apart from weariness and pain.
We would so gladly be at rest from all our trouble,
But, as by sin we lost our sinless state,
We lost as well our blessedness.
So we must needs be patient,
Waiting for God's pity,
Till "this iniquity be overpast,
And our mortality be swallowed up by life."

II.

Mar. 3. O think of man's weak state,
Ever bowing down to sin.
To-day you shrive you,
To-morrow you will sin again the sin you have confessed.

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Now you bethink you to be on your guard,
And in an hour you go and act
As if the thought had never crossed your mind.
We are right then to bring ourselves to lowliness,
And never have high thoughts,
Because we are so frail, so weak.
Soon we may lose, because of our neglect,
What with much toil we thought we had gained at last through God's good favour.*

What in the end then will become of us,
Lukewarm so soon upon the road?
Woe be to us if we would sink in rest,
As though it were now the time for peace and careless days,
While yet there is not seen a trace of holiness as we go upon our way.

Very needful would it be that, like young neophytes, we should again be led to all the ways that are the best;
If there perchance might be some hope for better things in days to be,
And greater progress on the heavenly road.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Musing on Death.

Mar. 4. SOON, so soon, it will be over with you here;
Think how it may be with you—there.
Man lives to-day,
To-morrow he is gone,
And when he passes from the eyes of men,
Even so soon he passes from the mind.

* Gratiam.

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How dull, how hard the heart of man!
He muses only on the things that are,
And does not raise his eyes to what must come.
Therefore in every deed and thought you ought to act
As though you were to die to-day.
If your conscience were but good
You would not have much fear of death.
Better it were to guard against your sins
Than nurse this fear.
If to-day you are not ready,
Will you be to-morrow?
And to-morrow is a day you must not count on;
How do you know that you will have the morrow for your own?

Mar. 5. What is the use of living long,
When our improvement is so slow?
But, ah, a long life does not always make us good;
It often only makes our guilt the greater.
Oh, would to God that in this world we had spent *one day* well.
Many count up the years since first they turned to God,
But often there is little fruit to show of life made holier.
If it be terrible to die,
Perhaps the living on and on will be more dangerous still.

Happy the man who ever holds before his eyes his hour of death,
And every day makes himself ready for the end.
If you have ever seen a death,
Think that you too must cross by the same road,
And in the morning say,
"I shall not see the evening of the day;"
And at the eventide,
"I dare not promise morning to myself."

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Therefore be ready,
And live so
That death may never take you unawares.
Many die suddenly and unexpectedly,
For "in an hour when you think not,
The Son of man will come."
And when that last hour does come on you,
Then you will begin to feel so differently
Concerning all your life that has gone by;
And you will grieve and grieve that you were so remiss,
And that you left so much undone.

II.

Mar. 6. How happy he, and prudent,
Who tries in this life to be such a man
As he would be found in death.
Perfect scorn of all the world,
And burning longing to get on upon the virtuous path,
Love of self-discipline,
And penitential work,
Quickness to listen,
And self-sacrifice,
And readiness to bear whatever goes against him
For love of Christ,
Will make a man sure of a happy death.

You can do many a good deed in your days of health,
But in your hour of weakness little.
Few by sickness are made better men,
And they who often go on pilgrimage
Are rarely made much holier men thereby.

Trust not in your friends and neighbours,
And put not off the safety of your soul for days to be;
Men will forget you sooner than you think.

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Better provide in time,
And send some good deed on your road before you,
Than put your hope in others' help.
And if you are not careful for yourself to-day,
Who will be anxious for you in the time to come?

Mar. 7. Now is the hour so precious;
Now are the days of safety for your soul;
Now is the time acceptable.
How sad it is you do not spend it better
When you may gain your meed—eternal life.

There will come a moment
When you will long for one poor day, or for a single hour,
Wherein you may improve;
And then perhaps you will not get your boon.
Come then, my darling one;
Freed from how great a peril you may be,
Snatched from how great a fear,
If only you have always been afraid that death is coming,
watching his step.

Try then so on earth to live
That in the hour of death you may be glad, not frightened.
Learn your lesson now; die to the world,
That you may then begin to live with Christ.
Learn your lesson now; scorn all,
That you may then be free to go to Him.
Chasten your body now by penance,
That then your confidence may be more sure.

III.

Mar. 8. Ah, fool, why think you you will live so long?
For you have no day sure to you.
How many are deceived,

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Torn from the body unexpectedly.
Have you not ever and again heard people say,
"Ah, *he* was pierced through with the sword,
Another drowned,
Another killed by falling from a height,
One stiffened into death as he was eating,
Another in his play,
Fire took another,
Or the steel,
The plague,
The robbers on the road."
And thus is death the end of all,
And human life is like a shadow swiftly passing by.
Who will regard you after death,
And who will pray for you?

My darling, now do, now do all you can;
You know not when your death may come,
Nor do you know what is to follow for you, then.
While there is time,
Gather immortal riches,
Thinking of nothing but your safety,
Caring for nothing but what is of God.
Make friends unto yourself by honouring God's saints,
Doing as they have done,
That, when you fail in this your life,
They may receive you in the eternal resting-places.
Keep yourself as a stranger and pilgrim on the earth,
Keep your heart free and raise it up to God;
For here you have not an abiding city.
Thither every day let prayers and groans and tears ascend,
That after death your spirit may gain a happy passing to the Lord. Amen.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

The Judgment and the Punishment of Sin.

Mar. 9. EVER gaze upon the end,
And think how you will stand before the awful Judge,
Whose eye sees all,
Who smiles not on your bribes,
Who takes not your excuses,
Judging with a judgment that is just.

O sinful one, foolish and wretched,
You who now and then are trembling at the face of angry man,
What answer have you for your God Who knows your evil deeds?
Why not provide yourself with something on the Judgment Day, when none will by another's word be shielded, none excused;
But every man will be a burden to himself,
Heavy enough to bear?
Then will your present toil bear fruit,
Then will your tearful prayers be heard,
Your groans will reach His ear,
Your grief will cleanse you and will satisfy your God.

A patient man that when receiving wrong
Grieves more about another's evil thoughts
Than for the hurt unto himself,
Loving to pray for those who are opposing him,
Not slack in asking pardon of other men,
Readier for pity than for rage,
Often hard upon himself,
And trying all he can to bring the flesh below the soul,
He has a faithful medicine that will purify his life.

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Better it is upon the earth to purge our sins,
And cut away our faults,
Than if we keep them to be purged in days to come.
In truth we cheat ourselves
By our unending love unto the flesh.
What else shall be the fuel of that fire
If it be not your sins?
The more you spare yourself in life,
The more you follow in the body's steps,
The harder will the reckoning be,
The more the food you keep to feed that blazing flame.

II.

Mar. 10. The sins wherein the man has sinned,
In them shall he be punished with the greater pain;
For *there* the lazy shall be driven with burning goads,
There the greedy shall be tortured with a thirst and hunger infinite,
There the wanton and the lovers of delightsome things
In burning pitch and in foul brimstone shall be bathed;
And like mad dogs
The envious men shall howl for grief.
No sin,
That shall not meet its own peculiar torment.
There shall the proud
Be covered with the blushes of confusion.
There the miser
Shall with most miserable poverty be fettered.

And *there* one hour shall in its punishment far heavier be
Than fivescore years on earth
In strictest penance spent.
On earth from time to time
There *is* a rest from toil,

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And here we now and then enjoy the comfort of our friends.
There is no rest,
No comfort for the lost.

Mar. 11. Be anxious now, be woeful now
Over your sins,
That in the judgment-day you may be safe among the blest.

Then shall the just arise, and shall stand firm
Against the foes that tortured and oppressed them.
Then shall those as judges stand
Who now in all humility bow to the sentences of men.
Then shall the poor and humble be confident indeed.
Then shall the proud be terror-struck on every side.
Then shall he seem to have been wise in this his life
Who learned to be a fool and to be scorned for Christ.

Then shall his harrowing cares so patiently endured
Be but a pleasant memory,
And all iniquity shall stop her mouth.
And every pious soul shall sing for joy,
And every worldly soul shall cry for grief;
And the hard-burdened body shall exult far more
Than if it had been always nourished
In the lap of all delights.
Then shall the cheap coat glitter with its splendour,
And the subtly woven robe grow black as night.
Then shall the lowly hut of poverty be praised
More than the palace walls picked out with gold;
And steadfast patience be of more avail
Than all high-handed worldly power.

Obedience, plain obedience shall then higher stand
Than all the cunning of the passing ages.

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A conscience fine and good shall make a man more glad
Than studied learning deep.
Then shall the scorn of wealth weigh heavier in the scale
Than all the treasures of the sons of men.
Then you shall get more comfort from your holy prayers
Than from your dainty fare.
Then you shall be far more joyful for the silence you have kept
Than for long tattling tales.
Then shall your holy deeds be worth
More than your lovely words.
Then shall your penance stern and rule of life delight you
More than all the pleasures of the earth.

Mar 12. So train yourself in little things to suffer,
That in the day to come you may be freed from heavier woe.
Try first on earth
What you can do hereafter.

If now you can endure so little,
How will you bear a torture that must last for ever?
If now the little suffering makes you so impatient,
What will gehenna make you then?
Behold the truth—the two you cannot have,
Here in the world to pass delightful days,
And afterwards to reign a king with Christ.
And had you lived even till to-day in power and pleasure,
What would it all have done for you,
If in this instant 'twas your doom to die?

So, all is vanity
Save loving God and serving Him alone;
For he who loves his God with all his heart
Fears neither death nor punishment,

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Judgment nor hell,
Because his perfect love gives him safe access to his God.
But he who still clings to his sin,
What wonder if he fears his death and shuns the sentence?
Yet it is good
That if your love for God cannot recall you from your evil ways,
Fear of gehenna should compel you.
But he who puts the fear of God behind his back
Cannot stand long in good;
Too quickly will he run into the devil's nets.

CHAPTER XXV.

A Burning Wish to Better All Our Lives.

Mar. 13. BE watchful in God's service and be diligent,
And often muse on what the life is you have chosen,
And why you left the world.
Was it not to live to God,
And to be a spiritual man?
Strive to make progress on your way;
For soon you will receive the wages of your toil,
And fear and sorrow shall no more be in your borders.
You shall do a little work,
And you shall find great rest, eternal joy.
If you continue in your work, zealous and true,
God will be surely true to you, and rich in His rewards.
Keep a fair hope
That you will one day win the palm;
But nurse no careless spirit,
Lest you get sluggish, or else proud.

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II.

Mar. 14. Once on a time a man oppressed with grief,
A man that ever wavered,
Hanging 'twixt hope and fear,
Laid himself down in prayer
Before the altar in a church,
And thus he thought and said,
"Did I but know I should hold on unto the end."
And, as he prayed, he heard a holy voice within him say,
"If you knew it,
What would you do?
Do now just what you would resolve to do,
And then you will be safe."
Forthwith, consoled and strengthened,
He gave himself unto the will of God,
And all his anxious wavering ceased.
No curious wish had he
To know what should befall him afterwards,
But he rather tried to find,
As he began and as he ended any action that was good,
The acceptable and perfect will of God.

Mar. 15. "Hope in the Lord, and do thou what is good;"
Thus says the prophet,
"And dwell thou in the land,
And thou shalt feed upon its wealth."

There is a thing that keeps full many a man from getting on,
And from an earnest bettering of his life,—
Dread* of the lions in the way, or of the toilsome fight;
But it is those who try with manly heart to overcome
All that is harsh and grievous to them,

* Horror difficultatis.

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Who make most progress on the road of piety.
For then a man gets greater good,
Wins fuller favour,*
When he kills his passion and gains the day over himself.
All men have not like sins to conquer and to kill;
Yet the careful zealous soul
Will be the stronger on his path,
Though he have more to overcome,
Than he of well-conducted ways
Who is less zealous to be good.

Mar. 16. Two things above all others help to great improvement on the road;
The first, to take yourself away with violence
From all that nature wickedly inclines to;
And next—the more you need the good, the more to press on towards it;
A third, to guard against and overcome
All that is wont to grate on you in others.

Look to your progress everywhere,
That if you see or hear of a good pattern set
You may be straight on fire to copy it;
But, if you think of anything as shameful,
Beware—for you may do the same,
And even if you *may* have done it once and yet again,
Try the sooner to improve.
Just as your eye sees other men,
So in your turn you are by others watched.

How sweet and pleasant to behold a brotherhood zealous and devout,
Men of good character—living their rule
How hard and sad to see men wandering from the path,

* Gratiam.

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Not practising the things to which they have been called.
How hurtful to neglect the plan of our profession,
And turn our thoughts to what does not concern them.

III.

Mar. 17. Remember then your purposed plan of life,
Putting the image of the Crucified before you.
You look upon the life of Christ and well may be ashamed
That you have not tried more to make yourself like Him,
Though you have long been walking on the path of God.
The monk whose practice lies
In the most holy life and passion of the Lord
Will find in it abundance for his uses and his wants,
Nor does he need to ask for what is better
Outside the life of Him.
O if Jesus on the cross did but come into our hearts,
How soon we should be learned, and how learned we should be.

Mar. 18. The zealous monk
Bears and takes well
All that is bidden him.
The careless monk, and lukewarm,
Meets sorrow upon sorrow,
Trouble on trouble,
Misery on every side,
Because he is without the inward comfort in his soul,
And he is not allowed to look for comfort from the world.
The monk who lives outside his rule,
Leaves the way open to a dreadful fall.
The monk who seeks a laxer and an easier life
Will always be in trouble,
For one thing or another will be always then displeasing him.

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How do so many other monks get on,
Close kept within the cloister's rule,
Coming out but now and then,
Living in contemplation,
Eating but sparingly?
Their dress is rough;
Their toil is great;
Their words are few;
Their vigils long;
Their sleep is short;
They pray their prayers ever and again;
And they are always reading;
Keeping themselves in all their order's discipline.

See the Carthusians and Cistercians,*
The monks and nuns of many another order;
See how they rise up every night
To sing their psalms to God,
And it would be a shame that you
Should grow so sluggish in your holy work,
When such a number of good souls
Begin to sing their songs to Him.

Mar. 19. O that there was nothing to be done
But praise our God and Lord with heart and voice:
O that you never felt the need to eat and drink and sleep,
And that you could be always blessing Him,
Spending your time in what is helpful to the soul.
Then you would be happier far than now,
When you are but the slave to something that the body needs.
O would to God these needs did not exist,
That there were no food wanted but the soul's,
Which we, alas, taste only now and then.

* Founded about 1100 A.D.

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When man has come to this,
That he looks not for comfort to created things,
Then does he first begin truly to taste of God.
Then, too, will he be well content, let what will come, come;
Then he will not rejoice for what is great,
Nor grieve for what is little,
Resting wholly, trustingly in God,
His all-in-all,
To Whom nothing ever dies,
Or fades,
But all things live to Him,
And at His nod without delay they serve Him.

Mar. 20. Ever be mindful of the end;
"Time that is lost never returns;"
And never will you get to virtue
Without anxious thought and care.
Once become cool,
You fall away;
But, if you give yourself to fiery zeal,
You will be quite at peace,
And all your labour will seem lighter to you,
Because of God's touch* and the good you love.
A zealous, busy worker
Is prepared for everything.

It is a harder thing to stand against one's faults and passions,
Than to labour with the body till the sweat pours down.
He who does not shun small faults,
Little by little slips into the greater.
You will be glad at eventide
If you spend your day with profit.

* Gratiam.

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Watch o'er yourself,
Arouse yourself,
And warn yourself,
And, let what will come to another,
Never neglect *yourself.*
The more you treat yourself with violence,
The greater will your profit be. Amen.

Here end the "Warnings Useful to a Spiritual Life."

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BOOK II.

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Here begin the "Warnings to draw us to the Inward Life."

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CHAPTER I.

The Higher Life Within.

Mar. 22. GOD'S kingdom is within you, saith the Lord.
With all your heart turn you to God,
Leaving this world of misery,
And your soul shall find its rest.
Learn to despise all outer things,
And give yourself up to the life within,
And you shall see God's kingdom come in you.
For it is peace and joy, joy in the Holy Ghost,
And is not given unto the wicked.
Christ shall come and give you His consoling presence,
If from within you have prepared a place where He may fitly dwell.
All His glory, all His beauty lies within.
The inner life delights Him;
And unto one who lives the inner life,
Christ often comes.
Sweet the talk: dear the consolation:
Great the peace: the intimacy passing wonderful.

Ho, faithful soul, make your heart ready for your Spouse,
That He may deign to come to you,
And take up His abode:
For thus He speaks,

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"If any love Me he will keep My words,
And we will come to him,
And with him will we make our dwelling-place."

Mar. 22. Room, then, for Christ,
And to all other entrance be denied.
And, having Him,
Then you are rich: He is enough for you.
'Tis He that will provide for you;
He will be your faithful steward in all,
That there may be no need to put your hopes in men;
For men soon change and quickly fail us,
But Christ stays till eternity,
And stands to help us firmly to the end.
We cannot put much trust in man, weak and doomed to die—
Useful and loving though he be;
Nor need we nurse sad thoughts
If now and then man thwarts us and opposes.
They that to-day are with us,
May, on the morrow, take another's part,
Shifting often like the changing breeze.

II.

Mar. 23. Then put your trust alone in God,
And let Him be your fear, your love.
He will answer men for you,
He will do what shall be best,
And He will do it well.
Here you have no abiding city;
Everywhere you are a stranger and a pilgrim,
Nor will you find your peace,
Save you be inwardly at one with Christ.
Why look you round,

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When this is not your rest?
Your home should be in heaven;
And all the sights of earth
Are to be looked at as a passing show;
Passing, passing by,—
And you with them.
See that you cling not to them,
For fear you be ensnared and perish.
Your thoughts must be with God on high,
Your prayers unceasingly must go straight up to Christ.

Mar. 24. And if you know not how to muse on high and heavenly themes,
Rest your thoughts on what Christ suffered,
And let them love to dwell upon His holy wounds;
For if you hurry with good thoughts
To Jesus' wounds and to the precious nail-prints,
In your trials you will feel great comfort;
You will think but little of the scorn of men,
And with ease you will endure detracting words.
For He when in the world was scorned of men,
Left amid insults in His greatest need
By all His friends and those who knew Him best.
Could Christ so suffer and be scorned,
And is there anything *you* dare to wail for?
Christ had His enemies and men that spoke against Him,
And do *you* want to find all friends and helpers?
Where shall the crown be for your suffering
If no cross meets you on your way?
And if you will have nothing go against you
How can you be His friend?
If you would reign with Him,
Bear up with Him; bear up for Him.
Had you once wholly entered to His inner life,

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Had you once tasted of His glowing love,
You would care little for your private weal or woe,
Nay,—you would be glad when insults come,
Because the love of Him makes men heap scorn upon themselves.

Mar. 25. He who loves Jesus and loves truth,
The man of really inner life,
From unchecked passions free,
Can turn himself with ease to God,
And lift himself above himself in thought,
And rest in peace, enjoying Him.

The man who tastes life as it really is,
Not as men talk of it,
Not as men value it,
He is the true philosopher,
Taught of God, and not of men.
The man who learns to walk the inward road,
Weighing outward life as little,
Asking for no set places, wanting no fixed times
To pray his holy prayers,
He soon collects his thoughts,
Because he never dissipates his life
Upon the outward world.
No outside work stands in his way,
No business "that cannot wait";
But as things come
He fits himself to them.
The man of inward method, ordered well,
Cares nothing for the strange and zig-zag ways of men.
The more we draw the world to us,
The more we listen, and the rougher is the road.

If it were well with you, if you were truly purged,

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All you meet would turn to good, would help you on your way.
It is because you are not fully dead to your own mortal self,
Nor separate from earth,
That many a thing grates on you and disturbs your peace.
Nothing so spots the heart of man,
Nothing entangles it so much,
As a foul longing for created things.
Refuse the comforts from without,
And you will shout for joy within, and often catch a glimpse of heaven.

CHAPTER II.

Lowly Submission.

Mar. 26. TAKE not much thought who is for you or against you;
But think and care for this,
That God be with you, whatsoe'er you do.
Keep a good conscience,
And He will shield you well;
For him whom God will help
Man's malice cannot harm.
If you can only hold your peace and suffer,
Without a doubt you shall perceive some help from God.
He knows when He will set you free and how,
And you must leave yourself to Him.
It is God's work—to help
And set men free from all confusion.

Often it aids us much to keep us in a humbler walk,
That other men know of our faults and talk of them.
When men are humble for their failings,
Then they easily calm others,
And lightly satisfy all that are wroth with them.

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II.

Mar. 27. It is the humble man that God defends and frees;
It is the humble man He loves and comforts.
To the humble man He bends,
To the humble man He gives abundance of His favour.
And when he is cast down, He lifts him up to glory.
To the humble man He shows His secrets,
And sweetly draws him to Himself, and bids him come.
The humble man, though he may meet with shame,
Is yet well enough at peace,
Because he stands on God, not on the world.
Think not that you have profited a whit
Unless you feel yourself lower than all.

CHAPTER III.

A Good Peaceful Man.

Mar. 28. FIRST keep yourself at peace;
Then you can quiet others.
The peaceful man is of more use
Than the great doctor.
The passionate turn even good to bad,
Lightly believing evil.
The peaceful man turns everything to good.
The man at peace
Never suspects,
But the disturbed and discontented soul
Is tossed by many a suspicious thought.
Not still himself,
Nor suffering others to be still,
Often he says what he should not;
Often he leaves what should be done,
Neglects his duty,
Musing on all that *other* men are bound to do.

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Therefore first be zealous for yourself,
And then you may be justly zealous for your neighbour.
You know so well how to excuse *your* deeds,
And throw another light on them;
Others' excuses you will not receive.
Better accuse yourself,
And set your brother free.
If you would have men bear with you,
Bear you with them.

II.

Mar. 29. Look at true charity and humbleness of mind.
It knows not wrath nor petulance,
Save with itself;
How far you are from that.
Living with the good and kind is nothing great.
That suits every one of course,
And every man likes quiet days,
And loves those men who think with him;
But a great gift it is, and worthy of all praise,
And a manly deed to boot,
To live at peace with men who are cross-grained, undisciplined, and harsh.

III.

Some there are who live at peace
Both with themselves and with the world;
And some who neither are at peace themselves,
Nor yet let others be;
A trouble unto others,
A greater trouble to themselves.
Some keep themselves in peace,
And try to bring back others too.

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Yet in this life of misery our peace must rather lie in
humble suffering,
And not in callousness to all that goes against us.
The man who knows how to bear suffering well,
Will enjoy greater rest.
He is the conqueror of himself,
Lord of the world,
Christ's friend,
The heir to heaven.

CHAPTER IV.

A Pure Mind and a Single Aim.

Mar. 30. BY two wings man is lifted from the things of earth—
Simplicity and purity.
Simplicity must be the keynote to his motive;
Purity the keynote to his love.
His motive aims at God;
His love embraces and enjoys Him.

II.

If you are free within from an ill-ordered mind,
Others' good actions will not hinder you.
If your motive and your aim be naught but God's will and
your neighbour's profit,
You will enjoy the inner liberty.

Were your heart right,
Then all created things would be mirrors of life and books
of holy teaching.
No created thing so small and worthless
As not to bring before men's eyes the goodness of their
God.
If you were good and pure within,

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You would see all things clear, nothing between,
And you would understand them all;
And a pure heart
Sees right inside—to heaven and hell.

As each man is within,
So he judges all that is without.
If in the world joy anywhere exists,
It is the pure in heart that own it;
If sorrow and heaviness be anywhere,
The evil conscience knows them well.

Mar. 31. As iron, when thrust into the flame,
Loses its rust,
And turns to glowing white,
So he who wholly turns to God puts off his sluggish ways,
And changes to another man.
When man begins to cool,
He fears a little toil,
And gladly welcomes comfort from without.
But when we really gain the victory,
And walk like men upon the way of God,
Then we think little of the things
That once we felt so hard.

CHAPTER V.

Thoughts on Ourselves.

April 1. WE cannot much rely upon ourselves,
Because God's favour and our own powers often fail us.

Our light is dim,
And even this we soon neglect and lose.
Often we do not see
That in our hearts we are so blind.

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Our deeds are often ill,
And our excuses worse.
Passion moves us ever and again,
And we think it zeal.
We blame the small mistakes of other men,
But for our greater sins—we pass them by.
Ready enough to feel and ponder on all we suffer from the world,
Thoughtless of all that others suffer at our hands.
If men would well and rightly muse on their own deeds,
No reason would there be for grievous judgment of another.

II.

April 2. The man who looks within,
Puts his anxiety for self before all other cares.
And he who diligently bends his thoughts upon himself,
Easily holds his tongue about the world.
Never will you live the inner life, never be holy,
Until you leave your neighbour's matters all in peace,
And look particularly on yourself.
If to yourself and to your God you wholly turn,
All that you see abroad will hardly move you.

Where are you when you are not present to yourself?
And after running everywhere,
What have you gained if negligent of self?
If you must have peace and really be at one,
You must put all else aside,
And keep yourself before your eyes;
Then you will gain much good,
If you can give yourself a holiday
From all the cares of time.
You will fail badly
Glancing at aught that savours of the world.

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III.

Let naught be great or high or dear or pleasant to you,
Save it be simply God or of God.
Think all but vanity
That comes by way of comfort from created things.
The soul that loves its God
Scorns all things less than God;
God only, everlasting and unmeasured,
Filling all the world,
The comfort of the soul, the heart's true joy.

CHAPTER VI.

Joy in the Conscience that is Good.

April 3. A GOOD man's glory
Is the witness that his quiet conscience bears.
With a quiet conscience,
You will continually have joy.
It can bear much,
And amid troubles is exceeding glad;
But the bad conscience
Is always restless and afraid.

Sweet will be your rest,
If your heart blames you not.
Only be glad at heart,
When some good deed is done.
The bad have no true joy,
Feel no true peace within;
"There is no peace for the wicked, saith the Lord,"
And if they say,
"We are at peace,
No evil shall come nigh us,
None will dare to hurt us,"

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Trust them not,
For on a sudden out will flash the wrath of God.
Their acts shall be brought back to nothingness,
And their thoughts shall fade away.

Glorying in trouble
Is not hard for one who loves;
For glorying thus means glorying in the Cross.
Short-lived is the glory
Given or received of men,
And sadness ever follows in its train.

II.

April 4. The glory of the good lies in their consciences,
Not in men's lips.
From God and in God is the glory of the just;
Their joy is what is true.
He who sighs for the true eternal glory
Gives not a thought to that of time,
And he who wants the fame of time,
Or does not heartily despise it,
Is proved to care but little for the fame of heaven.

A very quiet heart has he
Who cares for neither praise nor cursing.
If his conscience be but pure,
He is at peace and is content.
Praise makes you none the holier;
Cursing makes you none the worse.
What you are, you are,
God sees; you cannot be called greater.

If you but turn your thoughts to what you are when you are by yourself,
You will not care what men say of you.
Man looks upon the face,

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God on the heart;
Man muses on the deeds,
God weighs the motives.

April 5. It is a sign that a man's soul is lowly,
If he do always well and yet puts little value on himself.
It is a sign of purity and inward confidence
To want no comfort from created things.
The man who wants no proof from the outer world to help him on
Has, it is clear, trusted himself to God.
"He is not approved," says blessed Paul, "who lauds himself,
"But he whom God approves."
Within—a walk with God;
Without—no tie to any;
This is the inward life.

CHAPTER VII.

Love of Jesus above All.

April 6. HAPPY the man who knows what loving Jesus means,
Scorning himself for Jesus' sake.
We must leave what we love for Him we love,
For Jesus would be loved alone and above all.
Affection for created things is weak and treacherous;
But love for Him is faithful and will last.
He that to the creature clings
Shall fall with what is frail.
He that throws his arm round Jesus
Shall grow for ever stronger.

II.

Love Him, keep Him as your friend;
He will not leave you when all others go;

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Nor will He let you die at last.
One day you will have to part from all,
Willing or no;
But hold to Him in life and death,
And trust yourself unto His faithful care,
Who alone can help you when all others fail.
Such is your loved one,
That He will not take what is another's,
But He will have your heart alone,
Seated on His own throne like a king;
And He would willingly dwell with you
If you could only free yourself
From all things that are made.

III.

April 7. The faith you put in man, apart from Him,
You will find it nearly all lost work.
Lean not, trust not to the wind-swept reed;
"All flesh is grass,
And all its glory like the flower of grass will fall."

You will be soon deceived,
Looking so fixedly upon the outward form of man,
For if you seek your stay, your gain, in others,
Often, often will you feel but loss.
If in all you look to Him,
Of a surety you will find Him.
If you look but for yourself,
Then you shall find—yourself,
To your own ruin.
For men not seeking Jesus
Do themselves more harm,
Than all the world and all their foes can do.

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CHAPTER VIII.

Jesus, Our Familiar Friend.

April 8. JESUS near—all is well;
Nothing seems difficult.
When He is absent,
All is hard.

When He does not speak in us,
Comfort is worthless;
But if He speaks *one word*,
Great is the comfort felt.
Did she not rise, Mary of Magdala, from where she wept,
At Martha's word, "Here is the Master calling thee"?
Happy the hour
When Jesus calls you from your tears to joy of heart.
How parched, how hard you are without Him;
How empty and unwise
If you want anything beyond Him.
Would not the loss of Him be greater loss
Than if the whole world went from you.
What, without Him, can it give you?
Apart from Him, life is a grievous hell;
With Him, a pleasant garden.
If He be with you,
No enemy can hurt you.
He who finds Jesus
Finds a treasure rare,
A jewel above all others.
And he who loses Him is losing, ah, so much,
Much more than all the world.
Without Him man is but a beggar;
With Him, a prince.

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II.

April 9. It is a matter of much art
To know the way to live with Him,
And to know how to keep Him shows great wisdom.
Be you peaceable and lowly,
And He will then be with you.
You may soon drive Him off and lose His grace,
If you will turn away unto the outer world.
Once you have driven Him off and lost Him,
Whom will you look for and go to as your friend?
Without a friend you cannot live in health;
And if He be not your friend above all others,
You will be so sad and desolate.
Thus you are acting as a fool
If you trust in any other or rejoice.
You had better choose
To have the whole world set against you,
Than Jesus angry.
Of all those that are dear to you,
Let Jesus be your special love.

III.

April 10. All may be loved for Him;
But Jesus for Himself.
He must alone be loved with an exceeding passion;
For He alone, before all other friends,
Is found both good and true.
For Him and in Him friends and foes
Must all alike be dear to you,
And for all He is to be besought,
That all may know and love Him.
Never desire excessive praise or love;
This is the attribute of God alone,
Who has no fellow.

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And never wish that any one should set his heart on you,
Nor set your own heart upon any.
Let Him be in you
And in the hearts of all the good.

April 11. Be pure and free within,
Untrammelled by the love of anything created.
Bring to your God a naked heart and clean,
If you would rest and see
How gracious is the Lord.
And truly you will never come to this
Unless His grace go on before you, and it draw you on
To free yourself and say farewell to all,
That you may be alone with Him, and He with you, both one.
When God's favour comes to man,
He can do anything;
And when it ebbs from him,
It leaves him poor and weak,
A slave, left to his beating—
Yet in this he must not be cast down,
Must not despair;
But stand with even mind to do the will of God,
And suffer all that comes to him,
For the honour of the name of Jesus Christ.
For summer follows hard on winter,
And after night returns the day,
After a storm, great calm.

CHAPTER IX.

No Consolation.

April 12 IT is not hard to scorn man's consolation
When God's is near at hand.
But it is a very grand thing so to live

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That we can do without all comfort,
Either from earth or heaven,
And to be willing for God's honour to bear up
Against this exile of the heart,*
And to seek self in nothing,
And never look upon one's own deserts.

Is it so great
To smile and be devout when God's touch comes to you?
This is an hour beloved by all.
He rides with ease
Drawn in a chariot of God's grace.
What wonder if he feel no weight,
Carried by Almighty God,
And guided by the best of guides?

April 13. We are delighted to be comforted by something;
Man finds it hard to doff the garment of himself.

Laurence † the martyr and his priest o'ercame the world,
Despising all that seemed delightful in the universe,
And for Christ's love even suffered
That Sixtus should be taken from him,
Sixtus the high priest of God, whom he loved so much.
Thus by his love for his Creator he overcame his love of man,
And for human consolation he chose what pleased his God.
And you, too, learn to leave some close and much-loved friend, to show your love of God;
Nor take it grievously when you are left by one you love,
Knowing that we must all at last be parted.

* That is, the heart's home is not on earth: it is in exile here.

† He was roasted to death in Valerian's persecution, A.D. 250 *circ.*

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April 14. Great and long must be the conflict in a man
Before he learns fully to win the battle o'er himself,
And draw his whole affection unto God.
When a man rests upon himself
He lightly slips to human comfort,
But Christ's true lover and the careful follower of the good
Does not fall back on consolation,
Nor does he seek deluding sweetness such as this,
But asks that he may rather bear
Hard labour and stern practices for Christ.

II.

April 15. Therefore when comfort of the spirit is given from God to you,
Take it: be thankful;
But know—it is a gift of God,
And not a merit of your own.
Be not puffed up;
Do not rejoice nor emptily presume,
But be the humbler for the gift,
More careful and more timid in your actions;
For the hour of consolation will go by and trial will follow in its wake.
When comfort goes,
Do not at once despair,
But with humility and patience wait for the coming of the heavenly One;
For God can give you greater comfort than before.

This is nothing new nor strange
To those who know God's way;
For in the lives of saints and seers of old
Often has it been like this—
One comfort changing for another.

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Therefore one said when grace was with him,
"I said in my abundance,
I shall be never moved;"
But, when God's favour went,
He tells us what he felt; and says,
"Thou didst turn Thy face from me,
And I was troubled."
Yet even so, far from despairing,
He presses on his prayer to God, and says,
"To Thee, O God, I will lift up my voice,
And to my God lift up my prayer."
At last he brings the good back from his prayer,
And witnesses that he was heard, and says,
"God heard and pitied me,
He is become my Helper."
(And how?)
"Turning my wailing into joy,
Surrounding me with gladness."

April 16. If the great saints have found it thus,
We, weak and poor, must not despair,
If at one hour we burn,
And at another hour are cold;
Because the Spirit ebbs and flows
At the good pleasure of God's will,
And blessed Job has said,
"At early dawn Thou comest to him,
And on a sudden provest him."

III.

April 17. But what, then, can I hope for,
And in what thing should I trust?
Even in God's great pity alone,

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And in the hope of favour from on high.
For though good men be near me, pious brothers, faithful friends,
Sweet songs or hymns,
All these please me but a little,
Taste but a little,
When I am left by God and find myself in my own poverty.
Then there is no better remedy
Than patience and self-sacrifice beneath the will of God.

April 18. Never did I meet with man so pious, so devout,
Who, now and then, had not some lessening of God's kindness,
Who did not feel God's favour, now and then, grow smaller.
None so holy, so high wrought, so full of light,
Who has not been tempted, in days gone by, or now.
For he deserves not to enjoy a lofty thought of God,
Who is not tried for God by sorrow.
Trial is wont to be the sign of comfort coming soon;
For to men proved by trial
Heavenly consolation is vouchsafed,—
"To him that overcometh I will give for food the tree of life;"
And consolation from on high is sent
To make us brave to bear adversity.
Temptation follows
That man may not be proud for blessings he has had.
The devil does not sleep,
And flesh is not yet dead.
Haste therefore to prepare you for the fray;
For on your right hand and your left
Stand foes who never rest.

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CHAPTER X.

*Gratitude for God's Kindness.**

April 19. WHY seek for peace,
When you are born to toil?
Give yourself up to patience, not to comfort;
To the bearing of your cross, and not to joy.

For who, of all men in the world, would not with willingness receive comfort and spiritual joy
If he could always keep it?
For comfort in the spirit goes beyond
All earth's delights and all the pleasures of the flesh;
And all the pleasures of the world
Are vain or vile;
And only pleasures of the spirit good and sweet,
The children of the virtues,
Poured down by God into pure souls.

But these comforts from on high, man cannot always have them as he would,
Because the tempter's hour may not be over.

And visits from on high find a great obstacle—
False freedom and great confidence in self.

April 20. God does well in giving kindly consolation,
But man does ill,
In that he does not put it down to God, and give Him thanks for it.
And therefore gifts of grace cannot keep flowing in on us,
For we are thankless to the Author;
Nor do we pour them back unto the fount, the head of all.

* Gratia.

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Kindness is always due to him who will give kindly thanks
for it;
And what is granted to the humble will be taken from the
proud.

I refuse a comfort
That takes from me my sorrow for my sin.
I care not for a musing spirit,
Which leads me on to pride.
All that is high may not be holy;
All that is sweet—not good;
All that we want—not pure;
All that is dear to God—not pleasant;
I willingly accept that grace
By which I shall be ever found
The humbler and more timid,
More ready to give up myself.

II.

April 21. The man made learned by the gifts of grace, and scourged
by its withdrawal into wisdom,
Will never dare to praise himself for any good,
But rather will confess
That he is poor and naked.
Give unto God that which is His,
And to yourself ascribe your own.
Give Him—the thanks due for His kindness,
Yourself alone—the blame,
And feel your punishment is owed you for your fault.

Set yourself ever in the lowest place;
The highest shall be given you.
For the highest place means nothing unless the lowest goes
with it.
Saints highest in God's eyes

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Are lowest in their own;
The greater their humility,
The more their glory.
Full of the truth and heavenly brightness,
They want no empty fame.
Stablished and firm in God,
They can in no way be puffed up.
And they who give to Him
All that they have received of good
Seek no glory from each other,
Wishing for that which comes from God alone;
And they would have Him praised
In them and all the saints,
And ever to this aim they tend.
Be thankful then for smallest gifts,
And you will thus be worthy of the greater.
Account the smallest as the great,
And the more worthless as a special benefit.
If you regard the dignity of Him who gives,
No gift seems small or cheap;
For that cannot be small
That comes from God Almighty.
Though He may send you stripes and punishment,
It should be pleasant;
For all that He allows to come to us
He does to work the safety of our souls.

The man who longs to keep the touch* of God,
Let him be thankful for it when it comes;
And when it goes, wait patiently,
Praying for its return,
Careful and humble lest he lose it.

* Gratia.

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CHAPTER XI.

How Few the Lovers of the Cross of Jesus are.

April 22. JESUS has many a one who loves His heavenly kingdom,
But few that bear the burden of His Cross
Many that sigh for comfort,
Few that care for trouble;
Many He finds to share His table,
Few to join His fast;
All love rejoicing in His company,
Few will bear anything for Him;
Many will follow to the breaking of the bread,
Few to the drinking of His bitter cup;
Many revere His miracles,
Few come to the disgraceful Cross;
Many love Him
Till they meet adversity;
Many praise and bless Him
While they receive some of His comfort;
But if He hides Himself
And leaves them for awhile,
They fall to weeping or to great despair.

April 23. But they who would have Jesus for Himself, and not for some consoling power that goes along with Him,
In all their trials and heart-agonies they bless Him, just as when the height of consolation comes.
And if He never would console them,
Yet they would always praise Him,
And ever give Him thanks.
How powerful His pure affection is
Unmingled with self-interest or self-love.

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Those that are always looking out for comforts,
Must we not call them hirelings?
Are they not rather lovers of themselves,
And not of Christ,
Ever thinking of their own advantage and their gain?

I.

April 24. Where shall such a man be found
Who will serve God for nothing?
Rarely is one found so following the spirit
As to live bare of everything;
For who can find the truly poor in spirit,
Stripped of all created things?
As of a thing that comes from far, from very distant lands,
So would his value be.

If a man give all his wealth,
Yet it is nothing;
And if he make great penances,
Yet it is little;
And if he gain all knowledge,
Yet is he far away;
And if he have great worth,
And a devotion very bright,
Yet he wants much.
One thing he needs assuredly above all others;
And what?
To forsake all and leave himself,
To go out wholly from himself,
And to retain no love for any one.
When all is done
That he knows well he ought to do,
He then should feel he has done nothing;
Nor should it go for much

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Though what he does may be considered great;
But he should call himself a useless servant
If he would speak true.
So says the Book of Truth:
"Having done all that is commanded you,
Say, 'We are unprofitable servants.'"

Then will he be really poor and bare in spirit,
And with the prophet he can sing,
"I am alone and poor."
Yet none is richer than a man like this;
None is stronger, none is more at liberty,
Who knows how to desert himself and all,
And bring himself down to the depths.

CHAPTER XII.

The Royal Pathway of the Holy Cross.

April 25. THIS seems to many a hard saying,
"Deny thyself,
Take up thy cross,
And follow Jesus."
But far harder will it be to hear that word at last,
"Depart from me, ye cursed, to everlasting fire;"
For those who gladly hear the word given by the Cross, and follow it,
They will not fear to hear
Eternal condemnation.
This sign—the Cross—shall be in heaven
When the Lord shall come to judge.
Then all the servants of the Cross, who lived as did the Crucified,
Shall come to Christ the Judge, quite trustful.

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Why then fear to take it up?
By it you win your way into the kingdom.

April 26. In the Cross is safety,
In the Cross is life,
In the Cross protection from our foes,
In the Cross is sweetness
Poured on us from above;
In the Cross is spiritual joy,
In the Cross the sum of virtues;
In the Cross is holiness in perfect beauty.
There is no safety to the soul,
No hope of life eternal,
Save in the Cross.
Take then your Cross and follow Jesus,
And your path shall lead to everlasting life.
He went His way before you,
Carrying the burden for Himself.
He died for you upon it,
That you might take your own
And die upon it too.
But if you die with Him,
Even so with Him you live;
And if you are the comrade of His pain,
You shall share His glory too.

April 27. See—in the Cross all lies,
In death upon it all consists;
And there is none other road
That leads to life and to true peace of soul;
None other save the holy Cross,
The daily killing of our sins.
Walk where you will,
Seek what you will,
And you will never find a higher road above,

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Nor surer road below,
Than in the pathway of the Holy Cross.

Arrange and order everything to suit your will, to suit the pleasure of the eye,
And you will always find—a cross;
For either in your body you will meet with pain,
Or in your soul will have to bear trouble of spirit.
Now and again God leaves you;
Now and again your nearest friend will anger you;
And more—you will be grievous to yourself;
And you will not be able to be quit of it,
Or make it lighter
By any remedy or solace,
So long as God wills you to bear it.
His pleasure is that you should learn to suffer care uncomforted,
Wholly subjecting you to Him,
Getting a humbler spirit from your trials.
Christ's sufferings are by none so really felt
As by the man who has to bear the like.

April 28. Therefore the Cross is always ready,
And at every turn awaits you.
Run where you please,
You cannot shun it;
For everywhere you take yourself along with you,
And you shall always find yourself;
You shall always find the cross,—
Above, below, within, without,
Turn where you will.
And you must needs be patient
If you would have peace within
And gain the everlasting crown.

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II.

April 29 Bear the cross willingly
And it will carry you,
And lead you to the longed-for goal,
Where there shall be an end of suffering—
Though it will not be here.
Bear it unwillingly,
You make a burden for yourself,
Loading yourself the more—
And you must bear it still.
Throw it away,
And surely you will find another,
Perhaps a heavier one.

Think you to escape
What mortal man can never be without?
What saint upon the earth has ever lived apart from cross and care?
Why, even Jesus Christ our Lord was not even for one hour free from His Passion's pain.
"Christ," says He, "needs must suffer,
Rising from the dead,
And enter thus upon His glory."
And how do *you* ask for another road
Than this—the Royal Pathway of the Holy Cross?
All His life meant cross and martyrdom,
And do *you* seek peace and joy?
Wrong, wrong, if you seek anything but to suffer tribulation;
For all this mortal life of yours
Is full of misery,
Dotted round with crosses.
The higher anyone advances in the spirit,

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The heavier are the crosses he will find;
For as his love grows greater, so there grows the punishment—his exile on the earth.

III.

April 30. Yet though man be tried by manifold afflictions,
He has comfort wherewith to raise him;
For from the very suffering of the Cross he feels great good accrue to him.
He makes his will bow down unto himself,
And all the burden of his cares is turned to trust in comfort from on high.
The more the flesh is worn by suffering,
The more the mind is strengthened by the grace within;
And now and then the man becomes so strong (in love of tribulation and adversity),
Longing to make his cross like His,
That he would not be free from pain and care.
The more acceptable to God he deems himself,
The worse the trials and the heavier the cares
That he can bear for Him.

This is not man's virtue, but Christ's kindness,
Which can do and which does so much in man's frail flesh,
That what by nature flesh abhors and flees from,
It gets to love and tries to gain through this fervent mental fire.
'Tis not man's way to bear a cross,
To love a cross,
To beat the body and to keep it down in slavery,
To flee from honours,
Willingly to bear contempt,

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To look down upon himself,
To love that others should look down on him,
Suffering adversity and loss,
And sighing for no prosperous days.
Look to yourself,—
You will be able to do none of these;
But trusting in the Lord,
There shall be given you strength from heaven,
The world and flesh being brought low beneath your power.
Nor will you fear your enemy the devil,
If you be armed with faith, marked with the cross of Christ.

May 1. Then take your station as Christ's good and faithful servant,
To bear your Lord's Cross like a man,
The Cross of Him that out of love to you was crucified.
Be ready to endure much that will go against you,
And many things you will not like here in this life of misery;
For it will be with you, where'er you are.
Hide yourself where you will,
You will find it so indeed.
It must be so;
There is no way to shun the grief and ills that troubles bring,
But by bearing with yourself.
Drink lovingly the chalice of the Lord,
If you would be His friend and have a part with Him.
Leave consolation unto God;
With such things let Him act as seems Him good.
But you, take up your station to withstand all woes, and think them only as great comforts,
"For the sufferings of this time are not worthy to compare"—
No, not though you alone could suffer all the sufferings in the world—
"With the glory in the days to come."

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IV.

May 2. When you have come to this, that cares are sweet, and, borne for Christ, taste pleasantly,
Then think it well with you;
For you have found an Eden on the earth.
So long as it is hard to suffer and you try to shun it,
So long will you be ill at ease,
And everywhere the cross you shun shall follow you.
If you set yourself to what you should,—
I mean, to suffer and to die,—
Things will get better soon, and you will find your peace.

Though you be rapt to the third heaven with Paul,
You are not, therefore, sure that you will never suffer things that go against you.
Saith Jesus, "I will show him
What he must suffer for My sake."
Suffering then will stay by you,
If you would love Him, and for ever be His slave.
O would that you were worthy to endure for Jesus' name.
How loud would be the shout among the saints of God;
How large the progress in your neighbour's life;
For all praise suffering,
Though few can bear it.
But it were only reason that you should suffer for Christ a little,
When many suffer worse things for the world.

V.

May 3. Be sure of this,
That you must lead a dying life.
The more a man dies to himself,
The more will he begin to live to God.
No one is fit to understand the things of heaven,
Unless He brings himself to bear adversity for Christ.

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Nothing is dearer unto God,
Nothing more wholesome in this life,
Than willing suffering for Christ.
And if you had to make your choice,
You should choose rather woe for Christ
Than the refreshment that many comforts bring;
For you would be nearer Him,
More like to all the saints.
Our merit and our onward way lie not in comfort nor in much delight,
But rather in great troubles and in suffering many a care.

May 4. If there were anything for human safety better, more useful than endurance,
Christ would have shown it in His words and life;
For He cheers on His followers in plain words,
And all who would come after Him,
To bear the Cross, and says,
"If any would come after Me,
Let him deny himself,
And take his cross and follow Me."
Read then and scrutinise all that has been written,
But let this be the end;
For "through many tribulations
We must enter to the kingdom of our God."

Here end the "Warnings to draw us to the Inward Life."

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BOOK III.

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Here beginneth "A Pious Encouragement to the Holy Communion."

* This book is usually given as Book IV. It is third in the MS.

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THE VOICE OF CHRIST.

May 5. "COME UNTO ME, ALL YE THAT LABOUR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN,
AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST,"
SAYS THE LORD.
"THE BREAD WHICH I SHALL GIVE
IS MY OWN FLESH FOR THE WORLD'S LIFE.
TAKE IT AND EAT.
THIS IS MY BODY THAT SHALL BE GIVEN FOR YOU:
DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.
HE THAT EATETH MY FLESH AND DRINKETH MY BLOOD,
REMAINETH IN ME,
AND I IN HIM.
THE WORDS I SPEAK TO YOU
ARE BREATH AND LIFE."

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CHAPTER I.

How Great the Reverence with which Christ must be taken.

The Voice of the Learner.

May 6. THESE are Thy words, O Christ, Eternal Truth.
Yet not at one time given,
Nor yet in one place written;
But as they are Thy words and true,
With thanks and faith all are to be received by me.
Thine are the words, and Thou didst send them forth,
And they are my words too;
For to my salvation Thou didst utter them.
Joyfully I take them from Thy lips,
To fix them closer in my heart.
Words of such pity rouse me,
Filled with Thy sweetness and Thy love.
But my own sins frighten me,
And my foul conscience thunders back at me
Not to take hold of mysteries like these.
The sweetness of Thy words beckons me on,
The number of my vices weighs me down.

Thou biddest me with trustful heart come to Thee
If I would have any part with Thee;
And take the food of immortality

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If I would get eternal life and glory.
"Come unto Me," thus run the words,
"All that labour and are heavy laden,
And I will give you rest."
O word so sweet and loving in a sinner's ear,
That Thou, my Lord and God, invitest me, a beggar and an outcast, to the communion of Thy holy Body.

May 7. But who am I, O Lord,
To dream of coming unto Thee?
Behold the heaven of heavens holds Thee not,
And yet Thou sayest, "Come unto Me, come all."
What means this holy honour done to me?
What means this loving call?
How shall I dare to come?
I, that know no good in me, whereon to lean,
How shall I bring Thee to my home?
I, that so often have offended Thy kind face.
Angels and archangels reverence;
The saints and holy men do fear;
And yet Thou sayest, "Come unto Me, come all."
Were it not Thou, Lord, saying this,
Who would take it to be true?
Were it not Thou that biddest,
Who would try to come?

Lo, the just Noah, building the ark, worked for a hundred years,
That with a few he might be saved.
And I, how can I in one hour prepare me
To take all reverently the Builder of the world?

Moses, Thy darling one, Thy great and special friend, made him an ark of undecaying wood,
Clothing it with spotless gold,

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Wherein to put the tables of Thy law;
And I, a being of decay, shall I so lightly dare to take Thee,
Founder of the law, Giver of life?

Solomon, the wisest of all Israel's kings, built for seven years a gorgeous temple
To the honour of Thy name;
And for eight days held its dedication feast,
Offering a thousand victims for his peace;
And with the blare of trumpets and with joy, in all solemnity, brought to its destined place the covenantal ark,—
And I, unhappy, poorest among men, how shall I bring Thee to my home?—
I, that can scarce spend half an hour in holy thought;
I wish that I could look on one half hour spent well.

II.

May 8. Oh my God, how hard they strove to please Thee;
Ah, how weak is all I do.
How short a time I take
When I prepare for my communion.
Rarely are my thoughts drawn quite to one;
Rarely, if ever, am I purged from all distracting cares.
And yet I know
That when Thy saving deity is near me,
No unbecoming thought should flit across me,
And no created thing should hold my mind;
For I am to welcome to the inn
No angel, but the angels' Lord.

May 9. Yet there is a distance great enough
Between the ark and all its treasures,
And Thy pure body with its nameless powers;

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A distance great enough
Between those victims of the Law,
The shadowy signs of all that was to come,
And the true victim of Thy body,
The final sacrifice of all the offerings of the ancient world.
Why do I not glow more to meet Thy reverend presence,
Why with no greater care do I prepare me, to take Thy holy gift;
When saints and seers and patriarchs of old,
And kings and chiefs and all the people of the land,
Showed such devotion to the worship of their God?

III.

May 10. Before the ark of God, King David, pious king, danced with all his might,
Mindful of the kindnesses of old shown to his fathers.
Organs he made of every sort;
He wrote the psalms,
And set the land with joy to sing them;
And often to the lyre himself he sang,
Filled with the Holy Spirit's grace.
He taught his people Israel
To praise their God with all their heart,
And every day with tuneful voice to bless and tell His deeds.

If in those days devotion flourished thus,
And thus the praise of God was called to mind
Before the testamental ark,
How great in me and all the Christian world
Should be the reverence and devotion,
When the sacrament is here,
When we take up the all-surpassing body of Christ.

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IV.

May 11. Many run far and wide to see the relics of the saints,
And marvel at their deeds of which they hear,
And at the generous building of the shrines;
They gaze within and kiss the sacred bones,
Wrapped up in silk and gold.
And lo, *Thou* art here with me on the altar,*
O my God, Holy of Holies,
Author of men and lord of angels.

Often in such sights
There is but curiosity,
And something new that has not yet been seen;
And little fruit, little improvement,
Do men bring back with them,
Where, without true contrition, they run so lightly here and there.
But at the sacramental altar Thou art wholly present,
My God, Christ Jesus, Man.
There too, abundant fruit, salvation everlasting, may be seen,
As oft as Thou art worthily and piously received.
Unto this shrine no man is drawn
By fickle, sensual, curious thoughts,
But by pure faith, by holy hope, by charity sincere.

V.

May 12. O God, the hidden Maker of the world,
How wondrously Thou workest with us.
How gently and how graciously Thou dealest with Thy chosen ones,
Putting Thyself before them to be taken in Thy sacrament.
For this outruns all understanding,

* He is contrasting the saints with God.

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This above all draws pious hearts to Thee; this kindles love;
For Thy true faithful ones,
Who all their lives give themselves up
Unto the mending of their faults,
From the most worthy sacrament often receive
Devotion's grace,* and love of what is good.

VI.

May 13. O sacramental power secret and wonderful,
Known only to the faithful ones of Christ.
Unfaithful souls and slaves of sin can know thee not.
In thee is held all spiritual grace;
By thee the virtue that was lost is quickened in the soul;
And beauty, fouled by sin, returns to her.
Sometimes this grace is such
That, from the fulness of devotion gathered there, not the mind only, but the feeble body feels fuller power bestowed on it.

VII.

Yet we are lukewarm and neglectful, and we must weep and wail,
That with no greater love we are led on to take up Christ,
Christ the whole hope and merit of those that would be saved.
He it is Who makes us holy; He it is Who ransoms us for God.
He is our comfort on our journey, and the saints' eternal joy.
Weep, weep, that many men turn them so little to this saving mystery,
That makes heaven glad,
And keeps in being the universal world.

* That is, the power to be devout.

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May 14. Blind, blind and hard are human hearts,
That think not more upon a gift whose worth cannot be told,
And that from daily custom even drift into neglect;
For if this holy sacrament were celebrated in one place alone,
And by one priest alone,
How men would long, think you, for that one place, and for such a priest of God,
To see him celebrate the mysteries divine.
But now are many priests,
And Christ is offered up in many places,
That God's kindness and His love to men
May be seen to be the greater,
The farther that the sacred rite
Is scattered through the earth.

Thanks be to Thee, Jesus, good shepherd everlasting,
That with Thy precious body and Thy blood didst deign to feed us, exiles and in poverty,
And call us to receive this mystery with words of Thine own mouth,
"Come unto Me,
All ye that labour and are heavy laden,
And I will give you rest."

CHAPTER II.

Great is God's Goodness, Great His Charity, shown in the Sacrament to Man.

The Voice of the Learner.

May 15. IN Thy goodness and great mercy trusting, O my Lord,
Sick—I come unto the Healer;
Hungry and thirsty—to life's Fountain;
A slave—unto the Master;

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A creature—unto the Creator;
A soul in desolation—to my holy Comforter.
But whence is this,
That Thou shouldst come to *me?*
And what am I,
That Thou shouldst show Thyself to me?
How dares the sinner to appear before Thee,
And Thou, how deignest Thou to come to him?
Thou knowst Thy slave,
That he has nothing good in him
That Thou shouldst grant him this.
Wherefore I confess my vileness;
I recognise Thy goodness;
I praise Thy pity,
And give Thee thanks for Thine exceeding charity.
For Thou dost this for Thyself,
Not for any good in me;
That Thy goodness may be better known of me,
Thy charity more fully brought to me,
Thy lowliness more perfectly borne in on me.
So, forasmuch as this is pleasing unto Thee,
And Thou hast willed it should be so,
Thy condescension also pleases me.
Would God that my unrighteousness stood not in my way.

May 16. Sweetest and kindest Jesus,
How great the reverence, the thanks, the never-ceasing praise, due to Thee for our taking of Thy sacred body.
No man is found who can unfold it worthily,
But what shall I think when I come in this communion unto my God—my God, Whom worthily I cannot reverence?

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And yet I long devoutly to receive Him.
What better, what more healthful thought to me,
Than wholly before Thee to humble self,
And raise high over me Thine unending goodness?
I praise Thee, O my God, and lift Thee up for ever.
I scorn myself and lay me low down in the depths of all my sin.

Holy of Holies, Thou;
And I, the scum of sinners.
Thou bendest down to me;
I am not fit to look at Thee again.
Lo, Thou wouldst come to me,
Thou wouldst be with me,
Thou callest me to this Thy feast,
Thou wouldst give me heavenly food,
And angels' bread to eat,
No other than the living bread, that down from heaven descended, Thee Thyself,
That givest the world life.

May 17. See whence love comes,
What condescension shines from Thee.
How great the thanks and praise owed Thee for this.
How healthful and how useful was Thy plan,
When Thou didst institute this rite.
How sweet and pleasant is the feast,
When Thou didst give Thyself for food.
How wonderful Thy working, O my God,
How strong Thy power,
Thy truth beyond all speech;
For Thou didst speak and all was made,
And this was done that Thou didst bid.
Wonderful, worthy of belief,
And yet outstripping human understanding,

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That Thou, Lord God, my true God and yet man, art held in the poor form
Of bread and flowing wine,
Eaten by him who takes Thee, and yet unconsumed.

Thou God of all the world, Thou that needest nothing, didst will by this Thy sacrament to dwell in us;
Keep my heart and body pure,
That often and more often, with conscience clean and joyful, I may celebrate Thy mysteries,
And to my lasting health receive
All that Thou didst appoint and institute for Thine especial honour, and in memory of Thee for ever.

II.

May 18. Rejoice, my soul, give thanks to God, for such a noble gift,
For such a special comfort
Left to thee in this vale of tears.
For every time that thou receivest this, and takest the body of Christ,
Thou followest out the work of thy redemption,
And thou art made to share in all the merits of our Lord.
His charity is never lessened,
And the great river of His offering never dried.

Therefore ever with renewing mind thou shouldst give thyself to this;
And ponder on salvation's mystery with careful thought;
And it should seem as great, as new, as sweet to thee,
To celebrate, or hear the mass,
As if to-day Christ had first come
Descending, man, into the Virgin's womb,
As if to-day to save the world He hung upon the cross, suffered and died.

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CHAPTER III.

It is a Useful Thing often to take the Sacrament.

The Voice of the Learner.

May 19. SEE, I am coming to Thee, Lord,
That it may be well with me according to Thy gift,
And that I may be joyful in the holy feast
Which Thou, God, hast prepared
In Thy sweet mercy for the poor.
In Thee is all I can or ought to need,
My safety and my ransom,
My life, my strength,
My glory and my honour.

Therefore to-day rejoice Thy servant's soul,
"For to Thee, Lord Jesu, have I lift up my soul."
Now piously and reverently would I take Thee,
And I would bring Thee to my home,
And, with Zacchæus,* win a blessing of Thee,
And be reckoned among Abraham's sons.
My soul lusts to take Thy body;
My heart would be made one with Thee.
Give me Thyself and 'tis enough,
For, without Thee, no comfort is of use to me.

Away from Thee I cannot be,
Without Thy visiting me I cannot live;
And I must often come to Thee,
And take Thee for the medicine of my health,†
That I fail not on my way,
Robbed of my food from heaven.

* Zachæus, MS.
† In remedium salutis meae.

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For Thou, Jesus, most pitiful, when preaching to the crowds, and curing many a weakly one,
Didst say in olden time,
"I will not send them fasting to their homes,
For fear they faint upon the road."
Deal in like manner then with me,
Thou that in the sacrament hast left Thyself
For the comfort of Thy saints.
Thou art the soul's sweet food,
And he that worthily has eaten Thee
Shares in the heritage of Thine eternal glory.

May 20. Needs must I, who slip and sin so often,
Who faint and fail so soon,—
Needs must I, by many a shrift, by many a prayer, and by the holy taking of Thy body, arouse myself, renew, and purify and fire myself;
Lest, keeping far from Thee too long, I slip back from my holy task.
For from the days of youth
The sense of man is prone to evil,
And, if the medicine of God comes not to help him,
Man soon slips into what is worse.
Therefore the holy sacrament
Draws man back from what is base,
And strengthens him in what is good.
For if I am so often lax and careless when I celebrate or when I take,
What would it be if I took not the remedy, and did not seek a help so great?
And though I am not every day fit or disposed to celebrate it well,
Yet will I do my best, at seasonable times, to take the sacred mysteries,

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And make myself a sharer in so great a favour.
For this is one chief comfort of the faithful soul, long as it wanders from Thee in its mortal frame,
Ever to be mindful of its God,
Ever with mind devout to take its loved one in.

II.

May 21. O strange the condescension of Thy goodness round about us,
That Thou, the Lord our God, creator and life-giver, inspirer of all things that breathe,
Dost deign to come to the poor little soul,
Filling the hungry void with all Thy Godhead and Thy manhood.
Happy the mind and blest the soul, worthy loyally to take Thee in, its Lord and God,
And, in the taking Thee, to be filled full with spiritual gladness.
How great the Master it receives,
How loved the Guest it leadeth in,
How sweet the Fellow that it welcomes home,
How true the Friend embraced,
How noble and how beautiful
The Spouse it takes into its arms,
To be loved before all its cherished ones, and before all we long for.
Heaven and earth and all their ornament, silent let them lie before the face of Thee, my best beloved;
For all the praise and all the honour they possess
Come from Thy condescending gifts,
And yet they never reach the beauty of Thy name,
Whose wisdom is untold.

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CHAPTER IV.

Many Good Things are given to those who Piously Communicate.

The Voice of the Learner.

May 22. O LORD my God,
Go Thou before Thy servant with the blessing of Thy sweetness,
That I may worthily and seriously come to Thy grand sacrament.

Rouse my heart to Thee,
And pull me out from my dull sloth.
Visit me with Thy saving power, that in the spirit I may taste Thy pleasantness,
Which in this sacrament lies hid, in all its fulness, as water in the spring.
Lighten my eyes, that they may see a mystery so great;
And strengthen me, to trust that mystery with an unfailing faith.
For 'tis Thy doing,
And no human power;
Thy holy institution,
And no discovery of man.
For no man is found able in himself to take and understand these mysteries,
Passing the keenness of an angel's thought.
What then can I, unworthy sinner, dust and ashes as I am,
Trace out and take out of so deep a secret?
My Lord, I come to Thee with simple heart, at Thy command, with good firm faith, with hope and reverence,

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And of a truth believe
That Thou art present here, both God and man.

May 23. Therefore Thou wouldst have me take Thee,
Making myself one with Thee in Thy love;
And thus I pray Thy mercy, and implore
That special grace be given me for this,
That I may wholly melt in Thee,
Flow over in my love,
And bring no outside comfort in to me any more.
For this, the highest and the worthiest sacrament,
Is safety of the soul and body,
The medicine to all the weakness of the spirit,
By which my faults are cured,
My passions curbed,
Temptations beaten down or weakened,
A greater grace poured in on me,
A growing virtue cherished,
Faith strengthened,
Hope hardened,
The flame of charity lighted and blown.

II.

May 24. For many blessings Thou hast promised, and still again dost promise, in Thy sacrament, to Thy loved ones who communicate with holy thoughts.
(My God, that takest up my soul,
Helpest my weakness,
And givest me all inner consolation.)
Much comfort Thou dost pour on them for many a tribulation,
And from the depths of their dejection Thou dost raise them to hope in Thee, their keeper,

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And with a new grace Thou dost cheer and lighten them within;
That those who felt themselves before communion
Anxious, and loveless towards Thee,
Refreshed with food and drink divine,
Find themselves changed to better men.

Therefore Thou dealest with Thy chosen, arranging well for them,
That they may truly know and clearly prove the weakness in themselves,
The goodness and the kindness gained from Thee.
Cold in themselves, hard, wanting in devotion,
The fervour, eagerness, and holy thoughts all come from Thee.

May 25. For who can come near to a stream of sweetness
And not bring back some taste of sweetness too?
Or who can stand before a blazing fire
And feel no touch of heat?
Thou art a fountain full and overflowing,
Thou art a fire that always burns,
Never cooling, never dry.
And if I may not drink my fill and satisfy my thirst,
Yet will I put my mouth unto the opening of the heavenly reed,*
That I may get never so small a droplet to take away my thirst,
And that I may not wholly wither.
And if I cannot be as yet all heavenly, aflame like cherubim and seraphim,
Yet I will try to press on in devotion, and prepare my heart,

* A golden or silver pipe or reed was often used. See Rock, "Church of Our Fathers," for illustrations.

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That I may gather some small flash of holy fire, humbly taking the creative sacrament.

All that is weak in me,
Jesus, my God, my holiest Saviour, Thou of Thy kindness and Thy grace supply for me.
Thou, that didst deign to call all to Thee in the words
"Come unto Me,
All ye that labour and are heavy laden,
And I will give you rest,"—
I labour, and the sweat is on my brow;
Torn with heart-sorrow am I,
Laden with sin,
Tossed by temptations,
Entangled and oppressed with many an evil thought;
And there is none to help me
But Thee, my Saviour, my Lord God.
To Thee I trust myself and all my wealth,
To keep and lead me to eternal life.
Raise me to the praise and glory of Thy name,
Thou that didst prepare Thy body and Thy blood as meat and drink for me.
Be near me, O my saving God,
That, often drawing near unto Thy mystery, the fire of my devotion may increase.

CHAPTER V.

The Priesthood and the Dignity of the Sacrament.

The Voice of the Beloved.*

May 26. WERE you as pure as are the angels, holy as St. John the Baptist,
Yet you would not be worthy to handle or receive this sacrament.

* An address to priests.

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For this is not a debt due to the worth of man,
That man should consecrate or touch Christ's sacrament,
And take for food the angels' bread.
Great is the service,
Great the dignity, of priests,
To whom is given what is not trusted to the angels.
For only priests, who duly in the Church have been ordained,
Have power to celebrate and consecrate the body of Christ.

A priest indeed is minister to God,
Using the word of God, God bidding and appointing him;
But God is there—chief Author, Worker invisible;
All that He wills bows down to Him,
All that He bids obeys Him.
Then in this sacrament most excellent you should trust more to God omnipotent
Than to your senses or to signs that you can see.
And with fear and reverence
Come to a work like this.

II.

May 27. Turn to yourself,
And see whose service has been given to you when the bishop laid his hands on you.

See: you were made a priest,
And consecrated one to celebrate.
Take heed then that you faithfully and piously offer the sacrifice to God at fitting times,
And show yourself a blameless man.
You have not made your burden lighter,
But you have bound yourself by closer bonds of discipline,*

* Sed artiori jam alligatus es vinculo disciplinæ:
Et ad majorem teneris perfectionem sanctitatis.

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And linked yourself unto a higher ideal of a holy life.
A priest should be adorned with every virtue,
Giving a pattern of good life to all.
His goings are not with the crowd, nor in the common walks of men,
But with the angels in the heavens,
Or with the perfect on the earth.

A priest in holy vestments clad acts in the place of Christ,
Praying for himself and all, a lowly suppliant to God.
Before him and behind him is the sign of the Lord's cross,
To bring Christ's passion ever to his mind;
Before him—on the chasuble,
That he may with care behold Christ's footprints;
Behind him—he is signed with it,
That he may bear graciously for God with any troubles set on him by others.
Before,
That he may mourn for his own sin;
Behind,
That he may weep for others' sins in pity,
And know that he is there to stand between God and the sinner;
Never growing dull in prayer, nor in the holy offering,
Till he be found to win God's pity and His favour.

Thus when he celebrates he honours God,
He makes the angels glad,
He builds the body of the Church,
He helps on those that live,
Gives quiet to the dead,
And wins a share in all things that are good.

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CHAPTER VI.

A Question—What should be the Use before Communion?

The Voice of the Learner.

May 28. PONDERING, O Lord, Thy worthiness, my worthlessness,
I shudder greatly,
And am confounded in myself.
For if I come not,
I shun life;
If I step in unworthily,
I meet with blame.
What shall I do, my God,
My helper and my counsellor in times of need?
Teach me the right way,
Put some short precept down before me,
Fitting the holy communion.
For it is good to know
How I ought loyally* and reverently to make my heart ready for Thee,
Either to take Thy sacrament unto my health,
Or celebrate a sacrifice so great and so divine.

CHAPTER VII.

Plans for Improvement. Examination of the Conscience.

The Voice of the Beloved.

May 29. TO celebrate, to handle and to take this sacrament,
The priest of God should above all approach
Humble at heart, and reverently suppliant,
In full faith, with a holy motive, meaning to honour God.

* Devote.

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Examine carefully your thoughts,
Cleanse them as best you may and make them pure, in real sorrow and in lowly shrift;
That you may have no burden there,
That you may know of no remorseful pangs,
To stop your free approach.
Frown on all your sin,
And mourn and wail especially for the transgression of the day;
And, if time suffer it,
Confess, in the secret of your heart, to God, the trouble that your passions bring you.

May 30. Grieve and lament that up till now you are so worldly, such a lover of the flesh,
Your passions so alive,
So full of restless lusts,
So careless in the watch over your outward senses,
So oft enfolded by many empty phantoms,
So much inclined to what is all around you,
So thoughtless of what lies within.
So ready for the laugh and for distraction,
So hard to turn to sorrow and to tears.
Prepared for easier rules and all that suits the flesh,
Slow to zeal or to harsh means.
Anxious to hear the news and see the beautiful,
Remiss in holding on to what is weak and lowly.
Longing to get,
Sparing to give,
Quick to hold,
Careless in talk,
Unable to rein yourself to silence,
In character undisciplined,
In action ever ready,
Eager at food,

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Dull at God's Word,
Swift to rest,
Slow to toil,
Wakeful at a story,
Sleepy at your holy vigils,
Hurrying to the end,
Wandering in attention,
Careless in your saying of the hours,*
Cool in the celebration,
Parched in communion,
So soon with thoughts distracted,
So rarely fully gathered to yourself,
So quickly moved to anger,
So ready to displease your neighbour,
Eager to judge,
Stern to condemn,
Merry in prosperous days,
Weak in adversity,
So often laying down good rules,
Carrying but little to the end.

And when you have confessed and wept for these and other failings, with grief and great disgust at your own weakness,
Set before you a firm plan to mend your life from day to day,
And go the better on your road.

May 31. Then with full resignation willingly offer yourself upon the altar of your heart, as a burnt-offering that will last for ever, unto the honour of My name,
By trustfully committing to My care body and soul,
That thus perchance you may be deemed worthy to come and offer sacrifice to God,
And take My body's sacrament unto your health.

* That is, the horarium, or book of the hours.

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II.

There is no offering worthier, no satisfaction greater to
wash away your sin,
Than if you give yourself purely and wholly unto God
When in the mass the body of Christ is offered,
And in communion.
If man does what he can,
And of a truth is penitent,
As often as he comes to Me for grace and pardon,
"I live," saith God,
"Desiring not the death of any sinner,
But rather that he turn to Me and live;
For I will no more think upon his sin,
But all shall be forgiven him."

CHAPTER VIII.

The Offering of Christ upon the Cross—The Resignation of Ourselves.

The Voice of the Beloved.

June 1. AS I, with hands outstretched and body naked on the cross, offered myself to God My Father freely for your sins,
That there was nothing left in Me,
Which did not wholly pass into a sacrifice, appeasing God;
So in the mass too you should give yourself with all your will to Me,
For a pure holy offering every day with all your might and strength, with all the inward power you have.

June 2. What more do I ask of you than to try

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To give yourself anew to Me?
What you give Me else I care not;
I do not ask your gifts, but you.
Just as it would not be enough for you if you had all but Me,
So it will not please Me, whate'er you give, if you give not yourself.
Offer yourself to Me,
And give your whole self for your God;
The offering will be taken.
Lo, I for you gave all Myself up to the Father,
My body and My blood for food,
That I might be all yours,
You Mine—for ever.
But if you stand upon yourself, and do not freely give yourself unto My will,
There is no full oblation,
Nor will there be full union between us.

So there must be before your every work the freest offering of yourself into the hands of God,
If you would get freedom and the touch of God.
This is the reason why so few are really lightened and made free—
They cannot wholly sacrifice themselves.

Stern is My word:
"Unless a man giveth up all,
He cannot be a follower of Mine."
So, would you be one?
Offer yourself to Me, and all your heart.

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CHAPTER IX.

Ourselves and all we have we ought to offer up to God: and we should Pray for All.

The Voice of the Learner.

June 3. LORD,
All is Thine
In heaven and earth.
I long to give myself to Thee, a free-will offering,
And be for ever Thine.
Lord, in my simple heart I give myself to-day to be Thy servant ever,
To listen unto Thee, and be a sacrifice of everlasting praise.
Receive me with this holy offering of Thy precious body
That I give this day to Thee,
An offering for myself
And for the safety of Thy people,
While holy angels standing by unseen look down on me.

II.

June 4. Lord, I offer up to Thee,
Upon Thy shrine that makes amends for all,
All my misdeeds and sins,
That I have done before Thee and the holy angels,
From the day I first began to sin even till now;
That Thou shouldst burn them all alike, and with Thy charitable fire consume them,
Wiping away the spots of all my evil acts,
Clearing my conscience clean of every speck,
And giving back to me Thy favour, lost by sin;
Granting me full indulgence,
Taking me up with pity for the kiss of peace.

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What can I do for all my wrong but with humility confess and mourn for it,
And without ceasing pray for intercession?
Hear me in mercy, my God,
When I stand and pray before Thee.
All my sins weigh on me heavily,
I do not wish again to sin them.
I grieve, I shall grieve for them all my life,
Ready for penance,
And to give satisfaction as I can.
Forgive me, O my God, forgive me them,
For Thy holy name,
And save the soul Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood.
I commit me to Thy pity,
I yield me to Thy hand;
Do with me as Thy goodness wills, not after mine iniquity and evil ways.

III.

June 5. I offer to Thee all the good in me, slight and imperfect though it be,
That Thou mayst make it purer, make it holier,
Welcome and take it to Thyself,
Ever turning it to better,
Leading me—useless, slothful, weakling though I be—
Unto a good and happy end.

IV.

I offer too to Thee
All holy wishes of the good,
All that my parents need,
Friends, brothers, sisters,
All that are dear to me,
And all who for Thy sake have acted kindly either to me or others;

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All who have wished and asked of me for prayers and masses to be sung for them and theirs,
Whether they yet live in the flesh or have already done their labour in the world;
That all may feel Thy helping touch,
And Thy consoling power,
Thy hand in peril,
Thy freedom from their punishment,
That they be snatched from every evil,
Joyfully giving exceeding praise to Thee.

v.

June 6. I offer too to Thee
Prayers and victims * to appease Thee,
For those in special who have injured me in aught, saddened me or reviled me,
Or brought some loss or trouble on me;
And for all those whom I have sometimes saddened,
Disturbed, offended, grieved,
By word or deed, knowingly or in ignorance,
That Thou wouldst pardon all our sins alike,
And all our evils done to one another.

Take from our hearts, O Lord,
Suspicion, anger, heat, dispute,
All that can injure charity
And spoil the love of brothers.

Pity, pity those, O Lord,
That ask Thy pity.
Give grace to those that need it;
Make us such
That we be worthy to enjoy Thy favour;
And gain eternal life.
Amen.

* He means the sacrament.

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CHAPTER X.

Holy Communion should not Lightly be Forborne.

The Voice of the Beloved.

June 7. OFTEN you must run back unto the fount of grace
And holy pity,
To the fount of goodness and of perfect purity,
If you would be free of passion, cured of sin,
And be made stronger and more watchful to meet the devil's wiles and all temptations.

The enemy that knows the good and the great healing power that lies within communion,
In every way, at every time, tries to hinder and draw back faithful and pious souls.
For when some try to fit themselves for their communion,
They suffer worse attacks of Satan.
He is the evil spirit;
As says the book of Job,
"He comes among the sons of God,"
That with his wonted wickedness he may disturb them, making them too timid and perplexed.
Lessening their love, taking away their faith by his assaults.
It may be they will let communion go,
Or come but cool at heart.

But we must not think a whit about his cunning and imaginations,
However base and horrible they be;
But all his phantoms must be thrust back upon his head.
The wretched one is to be mocked and spurned,
And never for his insults, nor for the storms he raises,
Are we to pass holy communion by.

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June 8. Often this hinders men—
Excessive care to get a holy frame of mind,
And an anxiety about confession.
Do as the wise would have you do,
Lay scruple and anxiety aside.
It stops the hand* of God,
It ruins holy thoughts.

You are disturbed or slightly troubled—
Leave not your communion for that,
But go the sooner to confess;
And from your heart
Forgive all others their offences.
But if you have hurt anyone,
Humbly ask forgiveness,
And God will fully pardon you.

II.

June 9. Why delay confession long,
Or why put communion by?
First cleanse yourself,
Be swift to spit the poison forth,
Hurry to get the remedy;
You will feel better than from long delay.
Suppose you leave it for one cause to-day;
Perchance to-morrow something greater will be found.
This way you might be kept long from it,
Becoming more and more unfit.
Fast as you can, shake yourself free from to-day's sloth and heaviness.
What is the use of long anxiety, passing whole days in trouble?
Why rob yourself of heavenly things because you have a daily cross?

* Gratiam.

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Nay: it is very hurtful to put off and off,
It brings on men a heavy sleep.

How sad it is that souls cold and inconstant are only glad to make delays in their confession,
And for this very reason would defer it,
That they may not be bound to keep a closer watch upon themselves.
How slow their charity, how weak their holy thoughts,
Postponing it so easily.

June 10. How happy he, how dear to God,
Who lives a life so good, and keeps such pure watch on his inner self,
As to be ready and well pleased
To take communion every day,
If he were unmarked of others,
And if it were suffered him.

When now and then a man keeps back from humbleness, or for some good reason in his way,
Praise him for reverence;
But if torpor creeps across his path,
He should arouse himself, and do what in him lies;
God will be there to grant him the good will;
That above all he looks for.
But when he is duly hindered,
He will never lose that will;
He will devoutly mean to take the sacrament,
Nor will he miss the benefit.
For any pious soul may every day, ay, everywhere, with health unto himself and unforbidden, come to a mental communion with Christ.
And yet on certain days and at fixed times,
He should receive with loving reverence

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The body of his Redeemer in the sacrament,
And rather aim at praising and at honouring God
Than at seeking any comfort for himself.
Oft as he thinks upon the mystery of Christ made flesh,
And dwells upon the passion piously,
So often he communicates in mystic wise,
And is refreshed by One he cannot see,
And his love burns anew.
But he who only makes him ready
When festal days are close at hand, or habit drives him,
Will be often unprepared.

June 11. Blest is the man
Who, celebrating or receiving,
Offers himself a holocaust unto the Lord.

When you celebrate, be neither slow nor fast,
But keep the good and ordinary way
Of those with whom you live.
You are not there to trouble others or to weary them,
But to go on the plain road according to the practices of those before us,
And to look rather to what helps the rest,
Than to your own devotion or your love.

CHAPTER XI.

Christ's Body and the Holy Scriptures are needed Above All Things by the Faithful Soul.

The Voice of the Learner.

June 12. SWEETEST Lord Jesu,
How great Thy sweetness to the pious soul,
Banqueting with Thee at Thy feast,
Where none other food is laid before its lips

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Save Thee, its only loved one,
Longed for past all the longings of its heart.
Sweet were it for me when Thou art there to pour a flood
of tears out from my inward love,
And with holy Magdalene to wash Thy feet.
But where is this devotion to be found?
Where is the flowing river of the holy tears?

June 13. I know that when I see Thee
And Thy holy angels,
All my heart should burn and weep for joy.
For, hidden though Thou art beneath another form,
I have Thee with me truly in the sacrament.
Were I to see Thee in Thy own, Thy heavenly brightness,
My eyes could not endure it,
Nor could the whole world stand
In the splendour of the glory of Thy majesty.
Therefore Thou carest for my weakness even in this,
That Thou dost hide Thyself beneath the sacrament.
I have, I worship,
What angels worship in the sky,
But I as yet in faith,
They in its unveiled beauty.

The light of true faith must content me on my path,
Until the day of everlasting sunlight breathe on us,
And shapes and shadows fade.*
But when that which is perfect comes,
The need of sacraments shall cease.
The blessed ones in heavenly glory
Need no healing sacrament.
Rejoicing endlessly in sight of God,
Gazing on His glory face to face,

* Donec adspiret dies æternæ claritatis
Et umbræ figurarum inclinentur. Cf. Cant. ii. 16.

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Changed from one brightness to another,
The brightness of the unfathomable Deity,
They taste the Word of God made flesh,
As it was from the beginning, and as it is eternally.

June 14. When I remember marvels such as these,
Even every mental consolation,
Even every comfort of the soul,
Becomes a weariness and burden to me;
For while I do not plainly see the Lord in glory,
I count as nothing all
That in the world I see or hear.
Thou art my witness, oh my God,
That no one thing can comfort me,
No creature give me rest,
Save Thee, my God, Whom I would contemplate eternally.
But this I may not do,
While in this mortal life I live;
So I must make myself patient indeed,
And bow myself in all this longing unto Thee.
Thy saints, O Lord, who now rejoice with Thee, high in the kingdom of the sky,
Waited the coming of Thy glory all their lives, trustfully, very patiently.
That they believed in, I believe in too;
That they hoped for, I hope too;
Whither they came,
Thither I trust that through Thy grace I shall come too.
Till then I walk in faith, strengthened by the pattern set by them.
For I shall still have holy books to comfort me and be a mirror of my life;
And, above all, Thy holiest body, my haven and my special cure.

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II.

June 15. Two things in this life above all I feel I need,
Without which I could scarcely bear these days of misery;
Here, in the prison of the body pent,
I know it, I need two,—
Food, light.
Therefore Thou hast given me in my weakness
Thy holy body to refresh my mind and mortal frame;
Thou hast set up Thy word, a lantern for my feet.
Robbed of these two, I cannot live aright.
My soul's light is God's word,
My bread of life—Thy sacrament.
And I may call these tables two, one here, one there,
Laid in the treasure-house of holy Church.
One is the table of the sacred altar,
Having the holy bread,—the precious body of Christ;
The other is the table of the law of heaven,
With its blest teaching,
Making me learned in the faith,
And leading me with steady hand up to the inner veil,
where the Holy of Holies lies.

III.

June 16. Thanks be to Thee, Lord Jesu, Light of light eternal,
For the table of Thy holy teaching,
Thy table served to us by servants of Thy house,
Apostles, priests, and other learned men.
Thanks be to Thee, Maker, Redeemer of mankind,
That Thou, to show Thy charity to all the world,
Madest a great supper,
Wherein before us for our food
Thou placedst, not the lamb, the type of Thee,
But Thine own holy body and Thy blood,
Making the army of the faithful joyful by Thy sacred feast,

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And drunken with salvation's cup,*
Wherein are all the joys of paradise;
And (though with happier, sweeter taste)
The holy angels share the banquet with us.

IV.

June 17. How great, how high the office of the priest,
To whom 'tis given to consecrate the Lord of majesty with holy words,
With lips to bless Him,
In the hand to hold Him,
With his own mouth to take,
And to the rest to minister.

How clean should be those hands,
How pure that mouth,
How sanctified the body,
How spotless shall the priest's heart be,
To whom the Author of all purity so often comes.
From the priest's mouth no word should go,
But what is holy, useful, honourable,—
So often does he take the sacrament of Christ.
His eyes should single be, and modest,
That ever look upon Christ's body.
Hands should be pure and raised on high,
That are ever handling Him Who made the heaven and earth.
To priests above all others, it is written in the Law,
"Be ye holy,
For I, the Lord your God, am holy too."

O God Almighty, let Thy touch assist us,
Us who have taken on ourselves the priestly office;

* Et calice inebrians salutari.

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That, worthily and loyally, with conscience good and in all purity, we may serve as household slaves;
And if we cannot pass our lives so innocently as we would,
Grant us at least to moan with worthy penitence over the evils we have done,
And with a humble mind and a good will to serve Thee with more zeal on the remainder of our path.

CHAPTER XII.

He that would Communicate should with Great Care prepare Himself for Christ.

The Voice of the Beloved.

June 18. I AM a lover of purity,
Giver of all holiness.
I ask for a clean heart—
That is My resting-place.
Prepare for Me a large room ready furnished,
And I and My disciples will make our paschal feast with you.
If you will that I should come to you,
And stay with you,
Purge the old ferment out,
Make clean the habitation of the heart,
Bar out the world and all the din of vices,
Sit like the sparrow lonely on the housetop,
And muse on all you do amiss in bitterness of soul;
For everyone that loves
Makes ready for the lover a fair and beauteous place;
By this is known the love of one receiving his beloved.

But know
That not by any merit of your own,

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Though you should spend a year to get you ready, thinking of nothing else,
Can you make this preparation good enough.
It is My holiness and kindness that suffers you to draw near to My table;
As though a beggar were invited to some rich man's feast,
And he had nothing else to give him for his kindness
But lowliness and thanks.

June 19. Do what in you lies, and do it carefully;
Not that it is the custom, not that you are bound,
But with fear and reverence;
And lovingly receive the body of the Lord, your God beloved, Who deigns to come to you.
I am He that bade you,
I have willed it to be done,
I will fill up what fails in you;
Come, take Me.

II.

June 20. When I give you the power to worship Me,* give thanks unto your God;
Not that you are worthy,
But that I pitied you.

Maybe the soul is dry, the power is gone;
Continue still in prayer,
Moan on and knock upon the door,
And stay not till you win a drop, a crumb of power to help your prayers.
You are in want of Me,
Not I of you.
You do not come to make Me holy,
I come to make you holy and to better you.

* Gratiam devotionis.

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You come for sanctity to Me, to be made one with Me,
To take fresh favour from Me,
And flash anew into a better life.
Do not neglect this power of prayer,
But with all care prepare your heart,
And bring your loved one home.

III.

Nor only when communion is not yet come should you prepare for pious thoughts,
But anxiously preserve that holy thought when the taking of the sacrament is done.
There is required of us no less,
That after-watch upon ourselves,
Than the good thoughts that go before.
For a close guard kept afterwards
Is the best of ways to get a greater share of grace another time;
And thoughts once scattered to the comforts from without
Make men exceedingly reluctant.*

Beware of talking much;
Stay by yourself,
Enjoy your God;
For you have One,
Whom all the world cannot take from you.
'Tis I,
To Whom you must give all yourself;
No longer in yourself to live,
But—all care set aside—in Me.

* That is, reluctant to communicate.

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CHAPTER XIII.

The Pious Soul should in the Sacrament long with all its Heart to be at One with Christ.

The Voice of the Learner.

June 21. I WOULD that one would grant me,
O my Lord,
To find Thee only, and to open all my heart to Thee,
And take Thee as my soul would long to do;
That none would gaze at me,
That no created thing would glance at me or trouble me,
That Thou alone wouldst speak to me and I to Thee,
As a lover talking to his loved one,
A friend at table with his friend.

This is my prayer, my longing,
To be made one with Thee,
My heart withdrawn from all things that are made,
Learning to taste eternity and heaven by frequent celebration and communion.
Ah, my Lord God,
When shall I be quite one with Thee, drawn in to Thee,
Myself utterly forgotten,
Thou in me, I in Thee?
Grant us to stay thus—one.
Thou truly art my loved One, chosen from thousands,
In Whom my soul hath been well-pleased to dwell for all the days of life.
Thou truly art my peace-maker,
In Whom my greatest peace, my true rest lies,
Apart from Whom it is but toil and endless woe.
Thou truly art the hidden God,
Thy counsel is not with the wicked,
Thy talk is with the simple and the humble.

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II.

June 22. How kind Thy Spirit, oh my Lord.
To show Thy sweetness to Thy sons
Thou deignest to refresh them with the pleasant bread that comes from heaven.

No other nation is in truth so great that it should have gods near to it,
As Thou, our God, art near to all Thy faithful souls,
To whom Thou givest Thyself to be eaten and enjoyed—
A comfort on the daily road, a lifting of the heart to heaven.
What other nation is so famous as the Christian commonwealth?
What thing beneath the sky so loved as is the pious soul,
To whom God comes, to feed it with His glorious flesh?

O kindness past the power of speech,
O condescension wonderful,
O love beyond all measure, spent alone on man.

But what am I to give Thee for this kindness,
For charity so excellent?
Nothing more grateful can I offer Him,
Than wholly to give up my heart to God, joining it closely unto His.

Then all my inward self shall leap for joy,
When my soul shall wholly be at one with God.
Then shall He say to me,
"Wilt thou be with Me?
I will be with thee."
And I shall answer,
"O Lord, bow down and stay with me,
And I shall love to be with Thee;
This is the end of my desire,
A heart made one with Thee."

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CHAPTER XIV.

A Strong Desire among some Pious Souls to take the Body of Christ.

The Voice of the Learner.

June 23. HOW many Thy sweet ways, O Lord,
That Thou hast hidden away for those that fear Thee.

When I remember some good souls, O Lord, that come with such great piety and love unto Thy sacrament,
I am confounded in myself and blush
That to Thine altar and Thy holy table of communion I come so cool—so cold.
So parched I stay, so far from heart-affection,
I am not all aflame before Thee, O my God,
I am not fiercely drawn to Thee, nor touched as many pious souls have been,
Who in their great desire and in the heart-love that they feel could not restrain themselves from tears.
Body and soul alike, to Thee, O God, the living fountain, from the being's inmost depths* their lips were open wide;
Nor could they stay, nor stop their hunger
But by the taking of Thy body with pleasant thought and eagerness of soul.

O, true and burning was their faith,
A proof both clear and strong that Thy holy presence was within them.
They truly know their Master in the breaking of the bread,
Whose heart so greatly burns within them, because of Jesus as He walks with them.

* Medullitus.

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Devotion and affection such as this,
Love and zeal so mighty,
Are often far from me.

II.

June 24. Be merciful to me, O Jesus, sweet and kind and good,
And grant me, Thy poor suppliant, to feel but now and then, in holy communion, some little heartfelt longing for Thy love.
My faith shall stronger grow,
My hope increase, because Thou art so good.
The flame once kindled, and heavenly food once tasted,
My charity shall never fail.
Thy mercy in its power can give the kindness longed for,
Can visit me most graciously with fervour of the soul in the day of Thy good pleasure.
For, though I burn not with the great desire
Of those especial souls that love Thee,
Yet, if Thou wilt, I wish for that great burning longing,
Praying and sighing for a place among Thy fervid lovers,
And to be counted in their holy company.

CHAPTER XV.

This Power to Pray is to be gained by Humbleness and by Self-Sacrifice.*

The Voice of the Beloved.

June 25. YOU must seek earnestly the power to be devout,
Look for it anxiously, wait for it with trust,
Take it with thanks,
Keep it in humility,
Work with it carefully,†

* Gratia devotionis.
† Studiose cum ea operari.

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Leaving to God the visitation—its length, its fashion—
until it comes to you from Him.

When inwardly your holy thoughts are slight or none,
Humble yourself,
But do not be too much cast down,
Nor yet inordinately sad.
In one short moment God will often give
What in long lapse of time He has denied.
Sometimes He gives us at the end
What He would not grant when our prayers began.
And if His touch were always granted soon,
Were always ready as we wanted it,
'Twould not be easy for weak men to bear it.
Therefore with good hope and with humble patience
You must await the power to pray.*

June 26. Yet, when it is not given,
When it is taken from you in some hidden way,
Impute it to yourself and to your sins.
Sometimes it is a little thing that hinders it or hides it
from us;
If we may call it little (is it not rather great?)
That stops a boon like this.
And when you take away or fully vanquish this great or
little stumbling-block,
Then you shall have what you have sought;
For, soon as you have given yourself to God with all your
heart,
Seeking neither this nor that to chime in with your pleasure
and your will,
But wholly laying down yourself in Him,
You will be one with Him, and restful.

* Exspectanda est devotionis gratia.

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Nothing will taste so sweet, nothing will please so much,
As the good pleasure of His will.

Whoever then has raised his motive with single heart up
to his God,
And freed himself from all ill-ordered love,
Or from dislike of aught in the created world,*
He is the fittest to receive the power,
And worthy of the gift of prayer.
God gives His blessing,
When He finds an empty vessel;
And the more perfectly a man renounces what is low,
And dies unto himself through sheer self-scorn,
The quicker comes the power,
Entering in fuller force,
Lifting the freed heart up.

II.

June 27. "Then shall he see and haste to it,
His heart shall marvel and expand in him,"
Because God's power is with him,
And he has placed himself within the hollow of His hand
for ever.
Lo, thus shall he be blest
Who seeks his God with all his heart,
"And hath not lifted up his soul to vanity."
He, when he takes the holy eucharist,
Wins this great favour—he is one with God,
Because he looks not on his own good thoughts,
Nor on the comfort to his soul.
Above those thoughts, above the words of peace,
He sees the glory and the honour of his God.

* He means that the world is outside our dislike or our love.

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CHAPTER XVI.

We ought to open our Necessities to Christ and ask His Favour.

The Voice of the Learner.

June 28. O MOST sweet and loving Lord, Whom now I long with holy thoughts to take to me,
Thou knowest how weak I am, the needs I suffer from,
The evils and the vices I lie bound in,
Weighed down how often, tempted, disturbed, befouled;
For remedy I come to Thee,
To Thee I pray for comfort and for help.
I speak to One that knows all things about me,
To Whom my inner life is wholly plain;
He only can console and fully help me.
Thou knowest what good I need before all other goods,
How poor in character I am;
Asking for grace, I stand, imploring pity,
Naked, a beggar, before Thee.

II.

June 29. Refresh Thy hungry suppliant,
Kindle my coldness with the fire of love,
Throw light upon my blindness by the brightness of Thy presence,
Turn all the things of earth to bitterness,
All heavy crosses into patience,
All low created things into oblivion and scorn.
Rouse up my heart to Thee in heaven,
Suffer me not to wander on the earth.
Now and for ever do Thou alone grow sweet and sweeter to me.

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My only food, my only drink,
My life, my joy,
My sweetness, all my good.

June 30. O that wholly Thou wouldst flash Thy presence on me,
Consume and change me into Thee,
That I be made one spirit, I and Thou, through power of inner union,
And through the melting influence of burning love.
Suffer me not to go from Thee fasting and parched,
But do with me of Thy pity
As Thou hast often done with saints of Thine so wondrously.
What wonder if I wholly grew on fire from Thee,
My own fire dead?
Thou art a fire that ever burns, that never fails,
A love that makes hearts pure,
And throws a flood of light upon the mind.

CHAPTER XVII.

Burning Love and Fierce Desire to Take Christ.

The Voice of the Learner.

July 1. WITH the holiest thoughts and burning love,
With my whole heart's affection and with fervour,
I long to take Thee, O my Lord,
As many saints and many pious folk have longed to take Thee in communion,—
Men that have pleased Thee most by sanctity of life,
Men that have been most fervent in devotion.

My God, my eternal love, my good, my happiness unending,

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I would receive Thee with the wildest longing and the most fitting reverence
That any of Thy saints e'er felt or could have felt;
And though I be unworthy to have all their holy thoughts,
Yet I offer all my heart's affection unto Thee,
As if I, I had in me all those pleasant burning longings.
All that pious men can think or wish,
All this with veneration and with inner fire I lay before Thy feet.
I would keep nothing from Thee,
Freely and willingly as on an altar I sacrifice myself, my all to Thee.

July 8. Lord God, my Maker and Redeemer, as Thy holy mother, the glorious Virgin Mary, conceived and longed for Thee,
When to the angel bringing her the tidings she meekly and devoutly answered, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it to me according to thy word;"
So, with thoughts like this, with honour, praise, and reverence like this, with gratitude and dignity and love like this, with faith and hope and purity like this, to-day I would receive Thee.
And as Thy blessed harbinger, John the Baptist, best of saints, glad at Thy presence, exulted in the Holy Spirit's joy,
While yet enclosed within his mother's womb;
And, long time after, seeing Jesus walking among men,
Humbled himself, and with devout affection said,
"The bridegroom's friend who stands and hears him,
Rejoices for the bridegroom's voice;"
So I would be afire with great, with holy longings,
And would present myself to Thee with all my heart.
Therefore I offer unto Thee, and lay before Thee,

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The joyful cries that well from pious souls,
The burning love,
The mental raptures,
The flashes from above,
The heavenly visions,
With all the virtues and with all the praises from all created things in heaven and earth, praises that have been and that shall be sung for me and for all others taken on my lips in prayer,
That Thou by all mayst worthily be praised,
And be for ever glorified.

II.

July 3. Accept my prayers, O Lord my God, and my desire to praise Thee without end,
To bless Thee without measure
With blessings due to Thee
For Thine untold greatness in its many ways.
All this I give Thee, and would give Thee day by day, at every moment of my time,
And call upon, and pray,
And with my loving prayers bid and invite all the spirits of heaven and Thy faithful ones with me to give Thee thanks and praises.
Let all the people praise Thee, tribes and languages,
And magnify Thy sweet and holy name,
In bright devotion and with jubilant cries.
And they who celebrate Thy loftiest sacrament with reverence and pious thoughts, and with full faith receive it,
May they too find with Thee kindness and pity,
And pray their suppliant prayers for me, a sinner.
And when they shall have gained the holy thoughts they longed for, and the communion they would enjoy,

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And, well consoled and wondrously refreshed, they have departed from the holy table,
Then let them deign
To think upon poor me.*

CHAPTER XVIII.

Man must not be Curious to Search into the Sacrament, but, Humbly Imitating Christ, He must Submit His Own Thoughts to the Holy Faith.

The Voice of the Beloved.

July 4. BEWARE of curious and of useless searchings
Into this sacrament so deep,
If you would not be plunged into the gulf of doubt.
The searcher of its majesty
By its glory will be crushed.
God can do more
Than man can understand.
God will allow a holy and a humble search into the truth,
A searching spirit ever ready to be taught,
Willing to walk on in the wholesome precepts of the fathers.
Blest the simplicity
That leaves the thorny ways that questions lead to,
Going upon the path of God's commandments, plain and firm.
Many have lost their thoughts of God
In wishing to investigate the greater depths.
Faith and pure love are wanted from you,
Not depth of thought, nor skill about the mysteries of God
If you cannot understand, nor grasp what lies below you,
How will you grasp what is above?

* This is the only reference to the writer.

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Bow down to God, humble your sense before your faith,
And light of knowledge shall be given you, so far as it is good or needful for you.

II.

July 5. Some are greatly tempted over the sacraments and faith.
Yet this is not to be put down to them, but rather to the enemy.
Take you no care,
Dispute not with your musing thoughts,
And give no answer to the doubts hurled at you by the devil;
But trust the words of God, and trust His saints and prophets,
And the wicked enemy shall flee away.

Often it does God's servants good
To have to meet such thoughts.
The enemy attacks not sinners and the faithless;
Them he has securely in his power;
But pious souls he tries and vexes many ways.
Then go upon your road with simple trusting faith,
Approach the sacrament with suppliant reverence;
And, what you cannot understand,
Leave without care to an all-powerful God.

July 6. God cheats you not;
He cheats himself who trusts himself too much.
God walks with simple men,
Shows Himself to humble men,
Gives to the feeble strength,
Opens His meaning to the pure in mind,
And hides His face from the inquisitive and proud;
For human reason is but weak, and it may fail;
But true faith cannot fail.

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July 7. All reason and all natural questioning
Should *follow* faith,
Not go before it, nor too close to it.
For faith and love are best of all in this,*
And work in hidden ways in this most holy and surpassing sacrament.
The Eternal God, past measure, infinite in power,
Does great things that we cannot search into in earth and heaven.
If all the works of God were such
That human minds could understand them,
No need to call Him wonderful, ineffable.†

* That is, in the sacrament.
† This book has no colophon.

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BOOK IV.

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* This book is usually printed as the third; it is the last in the MS.

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Here beginneth the "Book of Inward Consolation."

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CHAPTER I.

*The Inward Speech of Christ unto the Faithful Soul.**

July 8. I WILL hear what the Lord God may say in me.
Blest is the soul that hears its Lord's voice speaking within it,
And takes the word of comfort from His lips.
Blest are the ears that catch the throbbing whisper of the Lord,
And turn not to the buzzings of the passing world;
That listen not to voices from without,
But to the truth that teaches from within.
Blest are the eyes
That, shut to outer things,
Are busied with the inner life.
Blest are they who penetrate within,
And more and more by daily use
Strive to prepare themselves
To take the heavenly mysteries.
And blest are they who try to give their time to God,
And shake them free from all the burden of the world.

* This book is in great part a dialogue between God or Christ, the author, and the soul.

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II.

Turn thee to this, my soul,
And shut the doorway of the senses;
That thou mayst hear
The words of thy Lord God within thee.

Thus saith thy Beloved:
I am thy health,
Thy peace, thy life;
Keep thee near me,
And thou shalt find thy rest.
Away with all these passing scenes,
And seek the everlasting;
For what are all the shows of time
But guides to lead men wrong?
What can all creation help thee
If thou be left by the Creator?

Come down then and leave all;
Give thyself back, faithful and pleasing,
To thy Creator's hand,
To gain true bliss.

CHAPTER II.

Truth Speaks Within Us; there is no Din of Words.

The Soul.

July 9. "SPEAK, Lord; Thy servant heareth."
I am Thy servant,
Give me understanding, that I may know Thy testimonies.
Incline mine heart to the words of Thy mouth,
And let Thy speech drop on me as the dew."

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In olden days the sons of Israel said to Moses,
"Speak thou to us and we will hear.
Let not God speak to us,
Lest perchance we die."
Not thus, not thus, I pray,
But, with the prophet Samuel,
Humbly, longingly I cry,
"Speak, Lord; Thy servant heareth."

II.

July 10. Let not Moses nor a prophet speak to me,
But rather Thou, my God,
That didst send light and spirit on them all;
For Thou alone without their help canst fill me fully;
They, without Thee, are nothing worth.
They may sound out the words;
The spirit they cannot give.
Fair is their speech;
No heart is set aflame, if Thou art silent.
They hand the books to us;
Thou openest the meaning.
They put the mysteries before us;
Thine is the key to what is sealed.
They utter the commandments;
Thou helpest us to keep them.
They point the way;
Thou givest strength unto the journey.
They only deal with us without;
Thou art the guide and lantern for men's hearts.
They pour on us the water from above;
Thou givest us the increase.
They cry aloud;
Thou givest understanding to our ears.

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Therefore, let no Moses speak to me,
But Thou, O Lord my God, Eternal Truth,
For fear I die and be found fruitless,
Warned from without, not fired within;
For fear the word rise up to judge me;
The word I heard,—but did not do;
The word I knew,—but did not love;
The word I trusted,—but did not preserve.
Speak Thou to me, O Lord; Thy servant heareth.
Thou hast the words of life eternal.
Speak Thou to me, in some way comforting my soul, improving all my life,
To praise and glorify and ever honour Thee.

CHAPTER III.

*The Words of God are to be heard with Lowliness; many weigh them not at all.**

God.

July 11. HEAR, My son, My words of sweetness,
Surpassing all philosophies,
And all the knowledge of the world.
My words are truth and life,
And are not to be weighed and judged by human sense.
They should be received in silence,
Taken with all humility and love.

The Soul.

And I said,
Blest is the man Thou trainest, Lord,
Teaching him from Thy law,
To make the evil days seem sweet to him,
That he may not be desolate on earth.

* In this and other chapters the familiar "you" is substituted for "thou" when God is speaking to the fatihful soul.

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God.

July 12. I, saith the Lord, have taught the prophets
From the beginning of the world,
And to this day I cease not speaking unto all.
But many to My voice are dull and hard,
Many would rather hear the world than God,
Stepping lightly after fleshly appetites,
Following slowly God's good pleasure.

July 13. The promise of the world means things of time, small things,
And with great eagerness men make themselves its slaves.
My promise is of things eternal, mighty things,
And yet the hearts of men are dull to Me.
Who serves Me, listens to Me, with the care
With which men serve and listen to the world?
Blush, O Sidon, says the sea,
And if you ask why, hear.
To get a little, men run far;
But for eternal life
Many scarce lift a foot once off the ground.
Men look for worthless gains;
They sometimes basely quarrel at the law over one coin,
And, for some empty trifle or some little promise,
They fear not weariness both day and night;
But (shame on them) to win a blessing beyond change and chance,
A prize above all value,
Eternal honour, glory without end,
They are too dull to risk never so little weariness.
Blush then, servant, slow, complaining,
For men are found far readier for perdition
Than you for life;

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Far happier in the race for vanity,
Than you for truth.

Yet they are often cheated of their hopes.
My promises cheat none,
And send away none empty that puts his trust in Me.
All I have promised I will give;
All I have said I will fulfil,
If one will but continue faithful to the end in loving Me.
I give rewards to all the good,
I set my seal of favour on the pious soul.*

July 14. Write in your heart My words; weigh them with care;
For in temptation's hour they shall be very needful to you.
What you grasp not when you read,
You shall see clear when I come down to you.
My visits to my chosen ones are two—
Of trial, and of comfort.
I read two lessons to them every day:
One, when I lash their sins;
One, when I cheer them on to better things.
The man that has My words and scorns them,
Makes for himself a judge at the last day.

III.

A Prayer to ask for Holy Thoughts.

July 15. Lord God, my all Thou art,
And who am I to dare to speak to Thee?
I am the poorest little slave of Thine,
The lowest little worm,—
Poorer far, far more contemptible,
Than I know or dare to say.

Yet think on me, O Lord,
For I am nothing,

* Fortis probator omnium devotorum.

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Have nothing,
And am nothing worth.
Thou only art the Just, the Good, the Holy,
The All-powerful,
Giving all, filling all,
Leaving only sinners empty.
Have thought upon Thy pity,
Fill my heart with influence from Thee,
Thou wouldst not that Thy work should be in vain.
How can I bear me in this life of misery,
Unless Thou strengthen me with pity and with favour?

Turn not Thy face from me;
Delay not long Thy visitation;
Take not Thy comfort all away,
Nor let my soul become a thirsty land to Thee.
Lord, teach me how to do Thy will,
And to walk worthily and humbly before Thee.
Thou art my wisdom; Thou dost really know me,
Thou knewest me before the world was made, or ever I was born in it.

CHAPTER IV.

How we ought to walk in Truth and Lowliness before the Eyes of God.

God.

July 16. SON,
Walk in My sight in truth,
Look for Me always with a simple heart.
He that does this
Is safe from evil thoughts that come against him,
And truth shall make him free

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From all that leads him wrong,
And from the slanders of the wicked;
And when the truth has made you free,
You shall be free indeed,
And reck not of the empty words of men.

The Soul.

Lord, it is true,
I would that should be to me
Just as Thou sayest;
And that Thy truth should teach me,
Guard me and keep me,
Till I be in safety at the last;
Freeing me from every evil love, from all ill-ordered passion,
And I shall walk, a heart set free, with Thee.

God.

July 17. I will teach you, says the Truth,
What is right and pleasing in My eyes.
Think on your sins with much displeasure and with grief,
And never fancy you are anything for your good works.
Indeed, indeed you are a sinner,
Tangled in and slave to many a passion,
Ever of yourself tending to nothing,
Soon slipping,
Soon vanquished,
Soon dismayed,
Soon melting;
Nothing to boast of in you,
Much to make you think how vile you are;
You are far weaker than you can conceive.

July 18. Then let naught seem great to you of all you do,
Naught grand, or wonderful, or precious,

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Worthy of fame,
Naught high, naught truly worth a word of praise, naught worth a wish,
Save the eternal.
Let truth eternal please you above all,
And your own worthlessness displease you.
Fear, blame, and shun nothing so much
As faults and sins;
They should displease you more than any loss of wealth.

Some do not walk before Me with a perfect heart,
But, led by curiosity and pride,
They wish to know My secrets,
And understand deep things of God;
With never a thought unto themselves,
Nor to their own salvation.
These often slip down into sin and great temptation,
For I oppose their pride and prying ways.
Fear God's judgments,
And be afraid of the Almighty's wrath;
But question not the works of the Most High.
Look to your own iniquities,
And see how greatly you have sinned,
And how much good you have passed by.

July 19. Some carry their devotion only in their books,
Some in their pictures,
Some in outward shapes and signs;
Some have Me on the lip,
But little in the heart.

Others there are who with enlightened understanding and affections purged,
Pant ever for the eternal,
Listening unwillingly to earthly things,
And with sorrow serving nature's needs.

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These feel the meaning of the Spirit of truth
That speaks in them,
Because it teaches them to scorn the things of earth,
And love the things above;
To set the world at naught,
And ever day and night to long for heaven.

CHAPTER V.

The Wondrous Working of the Love of God.

July 20. FATHER of heaven, I bless Thee,
Father of Jesus Christ, my Lord,
That Thou hast deigned to think of me in poverty.
Father of mercies, God of consolation,
Thanks be to Thee,
Who, now and then, with Thy consoling words
Refreshest me, unworthy of all comfort.
I bless Thee always, and I give Thee glory
With Thine own Son, the One-begotten,
And with the Holy Ghost the Comforter,
World without end.
Ah, my Lord God, my holy Lover,
When Thou comest to my heart
All my inward life is glad.
Thou art my glory,
Thou art He that maketh glad my soul,
My help, my haven,
When I am in trouble.

But since I am so weak in love, and of imperfect character,
I need to be consoled and spoken kindly to by Thee.
Therefore come often to me,
Instruct me in Thy holy rules,

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Free me from evil passions,
Make my heart clean from all ill-ordered loves,
That I be in health within and throughly purged,
Fit to be a lover,
Brave to be a sufferer,
Firm to go onwards to the end.

II.

July 21. Love is a great thing,
A blessing very good,
The only thing that makes all burdens light,
Bearing evenly what is uneven,
Carrying a weight, not feeling it,
Turning all bitterness to a sweet savour.
The noble love of Jesus drives men on to do great deeds,
And always rouses them to long for what is better.
Love would be lifted up,
Not held by any thing of earth.
It would be free,
A stranger to the affection of the world,
That its view within may not be blurred,
For fear it get into the nets of temporal happiness,
Or for some unhappiness lie down and die.

Nothing is sweeter, stronger, broader, higher,
Fuller, better, or more pleasant in the heaven or earth.
It is the child of God,
Nor can it rest except in Him
Above the world created.
The lover runs and flies and is alive with joy,
Free, unrestrained,
Gives all for all,
Has all in all,
In one alone he rests, all else neglected,

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From whom all comes and flows;
Looks not to gifts,
But turns unto the giver above all.

July 22. It often knows no limit,
It boils above all measure,
Its fervour knows no stop.
It feels no weight,
Makes light of toil,
Would do more than it can,
Pleads no impossibility,
Because it thinks it can and may do all.
So it is strong for anything,
Is everywhere,
Gives men a title to do work,
Where he that loves not faints and fails.
In its vigils it may sleep, but yet it dozes not;
Wearied, it is not worn;
Bound, it is not confined;
Frightened, it is not dismayed;
But like a living flame, a burning torch,
It bursts on high, and safely goes through all.
If any loves,
He knows what these words mean.*
It is a great shout in the ears of God,
That fierce heart's love, that says,
"My Lord, my God,
Thou art all mine; I, Thine."

July 23. Enlarge me in Thy love,
That my heart's lips may learn to taste how sweet it is,
To melt and swim in it.
May I be holden by it,

* Novit quid hæc vox clamet; *or*, He knows what this cry means.

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Going above myself for very fervour and for wonder.
Let me sing a song of love,
Let me follow my Beloved to the deep,
Let my soul faint in praise of Thee,
Crying for love.
Let me love Thee
More than I love myself;
Let me not love myself
Except for Thee.
Let me love all in Thee—
I, who truly love Thee
As love's law bids me,
That takes its light from Thee.
Love is swift, sincere,
Pious, pleasant, and delightsome,
Brave, patient, faithful,
Careful, long-suffering, manly,
Never seeking its own good;
For where a man looks for himself,
He falls away from love.

July 24. Careful, humble, right,
Not weak, not light, aiming not at empty things,
Sober and chaste, firm and quiet,
With all the senses guarded well,
It is subject and obedient to superiors,
Lowly and scorned by its own eyes,
Pious and pleasing unto God,
Trusting and hoping ever in Him,
Even when He is not nigh;
For without grief, one cannot live in love.
The man that is not ready to suffer all,
And stand to do the loved One's will,
Is not worthy to be called a lover.

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A lover should embrace all that is hard and bitter
For the sake of Him he loves,
And not be turned away from love
For any crosses that may come.

CHAPTER VI.

The Proof of a True Lover.

God.

July 25. MY son, you are not brave as yet,
No prudent lover.

The Soul.

Why, O Lord?

God.

Because for little opposition
You leave off what you have begun,
And are too eager after comfort.
One that is brave stands firm in time of trial,
Trusts not the deep persuasion of the enemy.
As I please him when things go well,
I grieve him not when all is ill.
The prudent lover does not think so much
About the lover's gift,
As of the giver's love.
Not to the value does he turn, but to the loving thought,
And above all the gifts he puts the loved one.
My noble lover rests not in My gifts,
But, above every gift—in Me.

All is not therefore lost
If now and then you feel less kindly than you would
To Me or to My saints;

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That good and sweet affection which you sometimes feel
Comes from present grace,
And is a foretaste of the heavenly country.
You must not strive for it too much;
It comes and goes.
But strive against the evil passions of the mind,
Scorn all the whispers of the fiend;
That is the mark of worth and of great merit.

July 26. Then let no foreign phantoms trouble you,
Born of whatever cause they be.*
Keep a brave plan before you,
And a right motive towards your God.
'Tis no illusion to be rapt into a sudden ecstasy,
Though you may soon return to the old follies of the heart;
These follies you unwillingly endure;
You do not act them;
And if they be displeasing to you, and you strive against them,
It is a merit and no loss.

July 27. Know this; the old enemy is ever trying to stop your longings for the good,
To keep you free from every holy practice,
From reverencing the saints,
From the remembrance of My passion,
From the useful thoughts about your sins,
From the watch upon your heart,
And from your strong plan to do better.
Many an evil thought he plants
To make you weary of yourself, to frighten you;
To call you from your prayers and holy reading.

* De quacunque materia ingestæ.

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Humble confession angers him,
And, if he could,
He would stop you from communion.

Trust not his words, and take no heed of him,
Often though he throw temptation's nets around you.
When he puts evil counsels and impure within you,
Say to him,
"Go, foul spirit;
Blush, thou wretch.
Very impure thou art,
That bringest thoughts like this into my ears.
Depart from me, thou vile seducer,
No lot hast thou in me;
But Jesus shall be with me like a warrior brave,
And thou shalt stand confounded.
Far rather had I die and meet with any punishment
Than listen unto thee.
Hold thy peace; be dumb;
I will not hear thee more,
Though thou bring more trouble still upon me.
God is my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?
If wars rise up against me,
My heart shall not be afraid.
God is my helper
And my redeemer."

II.

July 28. Fight like a soldier true,
And if from frailty you sometimes fall,
Trusting in My fuller power,
Put on a might far greater than before;
And yet beware, beware of vain complacency and pride.
Thus it is that many are led wrong,

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And now and then into a blindness fall, almost past cure.
This falling of the proud, this ruin unto those who in their folly lean upon themselves,
Put it before you as a warning to humility.

CHAPTER VII.

Hide Power beneath the Watchful Eye of Humbleness.*

God.

July 29. MY son,
It is a good and a safe thing for you
To hide away your power to pray,*
And not to raise yourself too high,
Nor speak much of it, nor to weigh it much;
But rather to look down upon yourself,
And fear the gift of it to one unworthy as you are.

Not too closely must you cleave to this affection;
Too soon it may be changed.
Think in the days of it
How weak and poor you are without it.

You do not get so very far upon the spiritual path
Because you have the gift of consolation;
But if you humble self denyingly,
And patiently endure if it is taken away,
And grow not dull in earnestness of prayer,
Nor let your other usual works slip wholly by you,
But willingly do all that in you lies, all you know how to do,

* Gratiam devotionis. See especially pp. 146, 147.

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And do not leave yourself alone, because your mind is
anxious or your soul disturbed,
This is what progress means.
Many there are
Who, when it goes not well with them,
Forthwith are lazy and impatient;
For a man's path lies not always in his power.
But it is God's to come and comfort when He will,
And how He will, and whom He will,
As His good pleasure is—no more.

II.

July 30. Some careless men have quite destroyed themselves
about this power of prayer;
They wished to do more than they could,
Weighing not the measure of their littleness.
Following the longing of the heart,
And not the judgment of the reason,
They took more on them than was pleasant unto God.
So they soon lost it.
They became poor and were left miserable,
They that had built a nest in heaven;
To learn, impoverished and humbled,
Not to fly with their own wings,
But under Mine to rest and hope.

July 31. They that as yet are new, and unskilled in the way of
God,
Unless they rule themselves by the words of the discreet,
Soon may be deceived and hurt;
But if they wish to follow their own paths,
Their going out will be a road of peril,
If they refuse to be brought back from their own thoughts.
Rarely do men wise in their own esteem

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Let themselves be humbly ruled by others.
Better it is to taste but little,
And that with humbleness and little understanding,
Than to have stores of sciences and vain conceit.
Better have less than much
To puff you up with pride.

III.

Aug. 1. He acts not wisely
That gives himself quite up to joy,
Unmindful of his want in early days and of the pure fear of God
Which is afraid to lose the grace that has been given.
Nor is his wisdom strong enough,
Who in the time of trouble or in heaviness
Carries himself too desperately,
And thinks and feels less trustfully of Me
Than he is bound to do.
He that is too secure in time of peace
Will oft be found too timid and too fearful in the days of war.
Could you be always humble and modest,
And rule and bridle in your spirit well,
You would not fall so soon a prey to danger and offence.

Aug. 2. 'Tis a good counsel,
That when the spirit of fervour is conceived,
You should think how it will be with you when the light is gone,
And when this comes,
Bethink you that the light may yet return.
I have withdrawn it for a time
To warn you and to glorify Myself.
Probation such as this is better far
Than if you always had your will in prosperous days.

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A man's merits are not to be weighed by this, that, may be, he sees full many a vision, hears many a consoling voice,
That he is skilled in Holy Scripture,
That he is set in lofty seats;
But to be placed upon the rock of true humility,
Filled with the charity of God,
Seeking His honour with a pure and single eye,
Deeming himself as nothing, really contemptuous of self,
And readier far to be looked down on by the world, to be humbled and despised, not honoured.

CHAPTER VIII.

Valuing Ourselves at Nothing before the Eyes of God.

Aug. 3. I WILL speak unto my Lord,
Who am but dust and ashes.

If I think any better of myself,
Thou standest over against me;
My wickedness gives testimony true,
Nor have I anything to say.
But if I make myself as vile,
And bring myself to nothing,
Give up all thoughts of self,
Bruise myself to dust (I am but dust),
Thy grace shall be kind to me;
Thy light come near my heart;
And self-esteem, never so little though it be,
Shall be sunk low into the valley of my nothingness and die for ever.
Then Thou showest me to myself

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What I am and have been,
And the path by which I came;
For I am nothing, and I knew it not.
If I am left to mine own self,
See, there is nothing there; all wickedness.
But if Thou suddenly dost gaze on me,
At once I am made strong,
And filled with a fresh joy;
And it is very wonderful
If I so quickly am raised up,
So kindly taken to Thine arms,
I who of my own weight am always sinking to the depths.

Thy love does this, freely preventing me,
Helping when I so often am in need,
Guarding me also from great perils,
Snatching me from unnumbered ills.
Since by the wicked love of self I lost myself,
And found both Thee and me by only seeking Thee and purely loving Thee,
For very love bringing myself to nothing.
For Thou, O sweetest friend, dost with me
More than all that I deserve, dare hope or ask.

II.

Aug. 4. Blessed be Thou, my God,
Because, though I be yet unworthy of all good,
Thine infinite goodness and nobility never cease their kindness unto those that are ungrateful and are turned away from Thee.

Turn us to Thee,
To make us thankful, humble, and devout.
Thou art our safety,
Our might, our strength.

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CHAPTER IX.

All Things must be Referred to God as to the Final End.

God.

Aug. 5. MY son,
I ought to be your last, your final end,
If you would be happy.
With this before your mind your love shall be made pure,
That is too often bent upon itself
And turned unto created things.
For if you seek yourself,
At once you fail, and become dry.

Refer then everything to Me as to a beginning.
I gave you all.
Look upon everything
As flowing from the highest good.
To Me then, as its source, must everything be brought.

II.

Aug 6. From Me the weakling and the great,
The poor and rich,
As from a living fountain draw new life;
And those who serve Me freely, willingly,
Shall receive one kindness on another;*
But he who will be glorified apart from Me,
And will delight himself in any private good,
Shall not be firmly stablished in real joy,

* Cf. S. John i. 16. Is it too late, though the Revised Version has been issued, to protest against the mistranslation which speaks of "grace for grace"? The phrase means "a continual recurrence of kindnesses."

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Nor be enlarged in heart,
But often be entangled and benarrowed.

Therefore ascribe no good unto yourself,
Nor virtue unto any man,
But all to God,
Without Whom man has nothing.

Aug. 7. I gave you all,
I will have all given back to Me.
And I shall ask for thanks,—
And very strictly ask for them.
This is the truth
By which vainglory is defeated,
And if the grace of heaven and true charity have entered once,
There shall be no envy,
And no narrowness of heart,
And no self-love shall hold you.
For the charity of God shall conquer all,
And widen all the powers of the soul.

If you are really wise you will rejoice in Me alone;
In Me only will you hope,
For none is good save God,
Who is above all to be praised, and in all to be blessed.

CHAPTER X.

How Sweet to Scorn the World and Live a Slave to God.

Aug. 8. AND yet again, Lord, will I speak,
And will not hold my peace.
I will say it in the ears of God,
My Lord, my King on high.

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How many are Thy sweet ways to me,
That Thou hast hidden away for those that fear Thee.
But what art Thou to those that love Thee,
And serve Thee with the heart?
The sweet reward they gain that gaze on Thee
Cannot indeed be spoken of
And in this chiefly Thou dost show
The sweetness of Thy charity,
That, when I was not, Thou didst make me,
And when I wandered far from Thee
Thou didst bring me back to serve Thee,
And didst teach me to love Thee.

Aug. 9. Oh fount of everlasting love,
What shall I say of Thee?
How can I forget Thee
Since Thou hast deigned to think of me,
When I had wasted all away and died?
Past all my hope Thou showedst pity on Thy servant,
Past all desert of mine Thou didst give me Thy friendship's touch.

What shall I give Thee for this favour?
It is not given to all
To give up all, renounce the world,
And take monastic life on them.
Is it a great thing to serve Thee,
Whom all creation is compelled to serve?
It ought not to seem great to me.
But *this* is great and *this* is wonderful,
That Thou hast deigned to take to serve Thee
One so poor and so unworthy,
And to make me one with Thy beloved ones.
See; all is Thine,
All that I have to serve Thee with,

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And yet in other wise Thou art more my servant than I
am Thine.
Heaven and earth are ready to Thy hand,
Thou madest them to minister to man,
And they do always what Thou biddest;
And even this is little,
For Thou hast made the angels minister to him.
But it surpasses all
That Thou Thyself hast deigned to be the servant unto
man,
Saying Thou wouldst give Thyself to Him.

Aug. 10 What shall I give Thee for Thy thousand kindnesses?
Would that I could serve Thee my life long,
Or even for one day show forth
A service that is worth the name.
Thou art worth any service,
Any honour and eternal praise.
Thou art indeed my Lord,
I thy poor slave,
Bound with all my strength to serve Thee,
And never to grow weary in Thy praise.
This I wish; this I live for.
All that is wanting in me
Condescend to give.

II.

Aug. 11. Great the honour, great the glory won in serving Thee,
And to scorn all the world for Thee;
For they shall have great grace
Who willingly bow down unto Thy holy service.
They shall find sweet comfort of the Holy Spirit,
They who for Thy love sake
Have thrown all carnal joy away.
They shall gain great liberty of mind

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Who step upon the narrow path for Thy name sake,
And put aside all worldly care.

O pleasant joyous servitude of God,
By which a man is truly rendered free and holy.
O sacred state of pious slavery,
That makest man equal to the angels,
Makest him a pleasant offering unto God,
A terror to the fiends,
A comfort to all faithful souls;
Oh service to be taken and for ever chosen,
By which the greatest good is won,
And joy unending gained.

CHAPTER XI.

The Heart's Desires are to be Scanned and Limited.

God.

Aug. 12. MY son,
You have still much to learn
That yet you have not fully learnt.

The Soul.

What is it, Lord?

God.

To bend your wishes wholly to My will,
And not to be a lover of yourself,
But to be always wishing to work out My pleasure.

Aug. 13. For longings often fire you, fiercely drive you on;
But think you whether you are moving
To serve My honour or your own advantage.
If I am in the work,
You shall be well content
With all that I ordain;

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But if there lurk some touch of seeking after self,
This is the thing that hinders you and weighs you down.
Take heed then not to strive too much
Over a thought of your own heart,
Conceived without consulting Me,
For fear you afterwards be sorry and displeased
At what first pleased you, at what you showed such zeal for as the better way.
For every feeling that seems good
Must not be followed up at once;
And if it seems not good
It is not to be shunned at first.

II.

Aug. 14. Even in our longings for the good sometimes the rein is needed,
For fear by eagerness of mind we run into a careless way,
And by our want of discipline bring scandal upon others,
Or even when others cross us we on a sudden be disturbed and fall.
But now and then you must use violence,
And manfully oppose the lusts of sense,
Caring not what the flesh desires or hates,
But dwelling more on this,
That it be made a subject of the spirit, willingly or no.
And it must needs be punished,
Compelled to be obedient,
Till it be ready to do all and learn to be content with little,
And to delight in what is simple,
And not to mutter against what suits it not.

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CHAPTER XII.

The Lesson of Patience and the Wrestling against Lusts.

The Soul.

Aug. 15. LORD GOD, I see that patience is indeed needed by me,
For much in this my life goes contrary;
For whatsoever plan I lay down for my peace,
My life cannot be spent away from war and pain.

God.

It is even so, My son;
But I would have you never seek a peace that lacks temptation and never meets a cross,
I would have you think
That peace is only found
When you are tried by many a care,
And proved in face of many an opposition.

If you will say you cannot suffer much,
How will you bear the flames of purgatory?
Choose the lesser evil always,
And try to bear the evils of to-day
With even-mindedness for God,
To escape the doom that shall not end.

Aug. 16. Think you that worldly men suffer but little?
Ask the question of the softest lives;
You will not find it so.
But, say you, they have many a delight,
They follow after their own wills,
And care but little for their tribulations.
Let it be so,
They have their pleasures;

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But how long, think you, will they last?
See how they that are abundant in the world fade like a smoke;
Record of their past glories there is none.
Nay, even while they yet are in this life
They get no quiet from their joys: they spend their days in bitterness, in weariness and fear;
For that same thing from which they get delight
Brings on them sorrow often for its punishment,
And justly so;
That as they seek and follow after their delights unchecked,
They should fill full the pleasant cup in bitterness of heart and in confusion.
Short, how short,
How lying,
How base and how unbridled all these pleasures are.
For very drunkenness and blindness men perceive it not,
But, like dumb animals,
For trifling sweetness in a life that fades they dare the murder of a soul.

II.

Aug. 17. Therefore, My son, follow not your lusts,
Turn from your own will back again,
Delight you in the Lord,
And He shall give you what your heart desires.
Where lies your blessing?
Whence shall abundant comfort come to you?
In scorning all the world,
In cutting out* all low delights that fester in you,
If you would be truly pleased and fully comforted by Me.

* Abscissione.

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The more you take yourself away from all the comfort of the world,
The sweeter and the greater consolation shall you find in Me.

But at the first you will not gain all this
Without some sorrow and without some toil.
The rooted habit will stand up against you,
To be conquered only by the better one.
The flesh will mutter ever and again,
To be bridled only by the spirit's zeal.
The serpent, the old foe, will sting you and embitter you,
To be put to flight by prayer.
And one of his wide entrances
May be blocked up by useful work.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Humble Soul's Obedience unto Others, after the Pattern set by Jesus Christ.

God.

Aug. 18. MY son,
The man who strives to slip from his obedience
Slips too from grace;
And he who looks for private blessings
Loses the blessings that belong to all.

He who does not submit himself to his superior willingly and freely,
It is a sign he is not master of his flesh.
It often kicks against the goad and mutters.
Learn then this lesson soon;
Bow down to him who is above you,
If you would bring your flesh under the yoke;

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For, if the inward man be not a wilderness,*
The outer foe is sooner overcome.
But if you fight against the spirit
There is no foe so harsh, so harmful,
As you are to yourself;
But you must wholly put on self-contempt
If you would win against your flesh and blood.
You love yourself too much as yet,
And are afraid to give yourself unto the will of others.

II.

Aug. 19. But what fine thing is it
If you, mere dust and nothingness,
Submit yourself to man to serve your God?
While I, the Almighty and the Highest,
That made the world from nothing,
I humbly was a servant unto man for you.
I became lowliest of the lowly,
Basest of the base,
For you to conquer pride by My humility.
Learn to obey, dust that you are;
Learn to be lowly, earth and clay,
To bend beneath the feet of all,
To break your own will down,
To be a slave in all.
Be passionate against yourself,
Let not the tumour† live in you,
But show yourself so humble and so very little,
That all may walk above you,
And stamp upon you like street mire.

Aug. 20. Creature of emptiness, what can you moan about?
Foul sinner, where is your retort

* That is, by the outer man gaining victories over it.
† That is, pride.

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When men upbraid you,—
You that so often have offended God,
And many times deserved a hell?
But Mine eye spared you,
Your soul was precious in My sight,
That you might learn My love and live to thank Me for
My kindnesses,
Giving yourself up freely
Unto true service and a humble life,
And bearing patiently your load of scorn.

CHAPTER XIV.

Thoughts on God's Secret Judgments, that we Boast Not in Any Good.

The Soul.

Aug. 21. THOU thunderest judgments on me, O my Lord,
With fear and dread Thou shakest all my bones.
My soul is terrified indeed,
I stand in dumb amazement, and bethink me
That in Thy sight the heavens are not clean.
If in the angels Thou didst find out wickedness,
And didst spare them not,
How shall it be with me?
Stars fell from heaven,
And how can I, that am but dust, presume?
I have seen men whose deeds seemed full of praise
Fall to the lowest depths;
I have seen men that ate the food of angels
Pleased with the husks of swine.

Therefore holiness is none,
If Thou, O Lord, drawest Thy hand away.

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Wisdom worthless,
If Thou hold not the helm.
Bravery of no avail,
If Thou preserve us not.
Chastity unsafe,
If Thou protect it not.
Self-watching useless,
If Thou keep not Thy sacred vigil near us.
Left to ourselves, we sink, we die;
When Thou art near, we rise, we live.
Unstable, yet by Thee made strong;
Lukewarm, yet set on fire by Thee.

II.

Aug. 22. With what humility and lowliness I ought to think upon myself,
And weigh as nothing any good I seem to have.
How deep I ought to sink down in the waves of Thine unfathomable judgments,
When I find that I am nothing else
But nothing, nothing.
How past all measure is the weight,
How past all crossing is the ocean,
When I find nothing in myself,
The whole of me but nothing.

Where then may glory find a place to hide in,
Or pride blown from conceit?
Swallowed is all empty boasting in the wave,
In the deep wave Thy judgments have rolled over me.
What is all flesh before Thee,
And shall clay boast itself against the moulder of it?
How can a man rise high through empty speech
Whose heart is of a truth bowed down to God?

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The world, the whole world cannot raise him
Whom Truth has bowed unto herself.
Unshaken by the praise from all men's lips is he,
If his hope be rooted firm in God.
The very lips that speak,
See, they are nothing, all of them;
For they shall fade even as the voices fade,
But God's truth lasts for aye.

CHAPTER XV.

How we should Stand, what we should Say, when we Wish Anything.

God.

Aug. 23. MY son,
Say this in everything:
"Lord, if it be Thy will,
Let it be so.
Lord, if it be Thy glory,
So be it in Thy name.
Lord, if Thou seest it is well for me,
Approvest it as useful,
Then give it me to use it for Thine honour.
But if Thou knowest it harmful,
And of no profit to the soul,
Then take from me the longing."

Not *every* wish is of the Holy Spirit,
Good though it seem to man, and right.
'Tis hard to tell in truth
Whether a good or a strange spirit
Drives you to long for this or that,
Or your own spirit leads you on.

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Many are cheated at the last who seemed at first
To take a holy spirit for their guide.

Aug. 24. Whatever then crosses the mind
As something to be wished for,
See that the longing be with fear of God and lowliness.
And, above all, resigning self to Me,
Trust Me quite and say,
"Lord, Thou knowest
In what way it is better.
Let this or that be as Thou wilt.
Give to me what Thou wilt,
How much Thou wilt,
And when Thou wilt.
Do with me as Thou knowest, and as it pleases Thee.
Put me where Thou wilt,
Deal freely with me every day.
In Thine hand I am;
Wheel me and turn me back again.
See, I am Thy slave,
Ready for everything.
I would not live unto myself, but unto Thee;
I wish I could, worthily, perfectly."

II.

A Prayer for the Fulfilling of the Good Pleasure of the Lord.

The Soul.

Aug. 25. Yield me Thy favour, kindest Jesus,
To be with me, to share my work,
To stay with me unto the end.

Give me to long and wish for this,
Thy will and what is dear to Thee.

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Thy will be mine,
My will ever follow Thine, chiming in harmony.
My likes, my dislikes one with Thine,
That I may have no wish, no hate
Apart from Thine.

Grant me to die to everything on earth;
Here in the world, for Thee,
To live a life despised, unknown,
High above all my longings to set my rest in Thee,
And there to lull my heart to peace.
Thou art my heart's true peace, its only rest;
Apart from Thee all is but harsh and restless.
And in this peace,
And for this peace,
In Thee (I mean), the one eternal good,
I will lie down and sleep.
Amen.

CHAPTER XVI.

True Comfort must be Sought in God Alone.

Aug. 26. ALL that I can desire or think of to my comfort, I look for it—not here,
Hereafter.
For had I in myself all the comforts that the world can bring,
And could I taste of all delights that are,
Assuredly they could not last for long.

Thus, my soul, there is no true refreshment, no full comfort,
Save in God, Who takes the lowly up, and speaks consolingly unto the poor.

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Wait but a little while, my soul,
Wait for God's promise,
And all the good of heaven in its abundance shall be yours.

If you long too eagerly for what you see,
You shall lose the things of heaven and all that lasts for ever.
Use what is temporal,
But long for the eternal.

You cannot feed enough on any thing of time;
You were not made to take delight in this.
Though you had all created goods,
You could not be happy and blest;
But in the God Who made them all
Your blessedness and happiness consist;—
Not the blessedness seen and be-praised by foolish lovers of the world,
But such as Christ's true faithful ones are waiting for;
Such as the spiritual and clean-hearted people taste now and then before the time,
Whose life* is in the heaven.

Empty and brief is every human comfort;
Blessed and true the solace
Got from the truth within.

II.

Aug. 27. The pious soul takes Jesus, his consoler, everywhere with him,
And says to Him,
"Be with me, Lord Jesus, in every place and time.
This shall my comfort be,
To be content to free myself from every human consolation;

* Conversatio.

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And if Thy comfort fail me,
May Thy will and this just trial of me
Console me more than all.
For thou wilt not be always angry with me,
Nor threaten me for ever."

CHAPTER XVII.

All Our Care should Rest on God.

God.

Aug. 28. MY son,
Let Me do with you what I will.
I know what is the best for you;
Your thoughts are human thoughts,
Your feelings often follow a human bent.*

The Soul.

Lord, what Thou sayest is true;
Thine anxious thought for me is greater far
Than all my care for mine own self could be.
Man stands too dangerously
If he throws not all his care on Thee.

Let but my will remain straight and fixed to Thee,
Do with me what Thou wilt;
For what Thou doest cannot be but good.
If Thou wilt keep me in the darkness, blessed be Thou;
Or in the light,
Blessed again be Thou.
If Thou givest consolation,
If Thou sendest tribulation,
None the less, blessed be Thou, blessed be Thou.

* Tu sentis in multis sicut humanus suadet affectus.

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II.

God.

Aug. 29. Son,
Thus must you stand,
If you would walk with Me,
Ready for suffering as for joy,
As willing to be poor and portionless
As to be full and rich.

The Soul.

Lord, willingly for Thee
All Thou wouldst send me will I suffer;
And, as they come, from Thy hand will I take
Good and evil, sweet and bitter, gladness and sorrow,
Thanking Thee for all that comes.

But guard me from all sin,
And death and hell shall never fright me.
Only, cast me not away for ever,
Blot me not from the book of life,
And then no stab of grief shall do me harm.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Miseries of Time are to be borne with Even Mind; Christ showed Us how.

Jesus.

Aug. 30. MY son,
I came down from heaven to save you.
I took your sad life on Me, not that I had to do it, but love drew Me,
That you might learn to suffer,
And bear the ills of time without a murmur.

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For from the hour when My star rose,*
To its setting on the Cross,
My sufferings left Me not;
Great was My want of temporal comforts,
Many the scoffs I heard about Me,
Confusion and reproach I meekly bore,
Ingratitude for kindnesses,
Blasphemy for My mighty works,
Blame for My teaching.

II.

The Soul.

Aug. 31. O Lord,
Because Thou wast so patient in Thy life,
In this above all doing Thy Father's will,
Well it is that I, poor little sinner, should bear all with patience, and should serve Thy will,
And carry for my safety, long as Thou dost please, the burden of decaying life.
For though it feels a heavy weight,
Yet it is made through Thy grace very meritorious;†
And through Thy pattern, and from the footprints of Thy saints, it is more bearable and brighter for the weak.
Far more comforting it is than once beneath the law of old,
When heaven's gate remained shut,
And even the path to heaven seemed not so clear.
Then so few cared to seek the kingdom;
Nor could those who then were good and ready to be saved
Enter the heavenly city
Before Thy suffering and the debt paid by Thy sacred death.

Sept. 1. How great the thanks I am bound to give to Thee,

* Ab hora ortus mei.
† That is, if Christ bore it, men may too.

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That Thou didst deign to show me and all faithful souls
A straight way and a good to Thine eternal kingdom.
Thy life is ours;
By holy patience we press on to Thee, our crown.
Didst Thou not go before and teach us,
Who would care to follow?
How far away, how far behind, men would remain,
Did they not see Thy bright example.
Look, we still are cool,
After so many wonders told us, after so much teaching heard;
What *would* it be
If we had not a light like Thee to follow?

CHAPTER XIX.

Bearing Injuries—the Really Patient Man—the Proof of It.

Jesus.

Sept. 2. MY son, what is it you are saying?
Stop your complaints.
Look on My sufferings and the sufferings of the saints—
You have not yet "resisted unto blood."
Little enough is all *you* suffer,
Set against those that have endured so much,
Have been so greatly tempted,
So fiercely tried,
So often proved and exercised.
You should bethink you of their greater sufferings,
That you may lightly bear your trifling ones;
And if they seem not trifling to you,
See that it is not your impatience.

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Yet, small or great,
Try hard to bear all quietly.
The more you set yourself to suffer,
The wiser is your act, the more your merit.
You will find all lighter to be borne,
Your mind and ways being with care prepared for it.

Sept. 3. And say not,
"I cannot suffer this at that man's hands;"
"I ought not to endure this sort of thing;"
"He has done me a great wrong;"
"He charges me with what I never dreamed of;"
"From another I would gladly take it,
Just as I ought."
These are silly thoughts,
And look not to the *value* of the suffering,
Nor think by Whom the suffering shall be crowned,
But rather weigh the actors in it,
And the insults offered us.

He is not the really patient man, who would only suffer just as much as suits him, and from whom he pleases.

The really patient man cares not from whom he suffers
(His prelate it may be,
His equal or inferior);
Cares nothing whether he be tried
By good and holy folk,
Or by the worthless and cantankerous;
But with indifference he takes from every creature's hand as heavy crosses, and as many crosses as may come,
And all with gratitude to God, thinking them gain indeed.*
For nothing, little though it be,

* Ingens lucrum.

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Suffered for God,
Can pass without some merit in God's eyes.

Therefore be ready for the battle,
If you would win the day.
Without a fight
You cannot gain the crown of patience;
And, if you will not suffer,
You refuse the crown.
But if you want it,
Strive like a man,
And hold up patiently;
For without toil men do not reach their rest,
And without fighting do not come to victory.

II.

The Soul.

Sept. 4. Let that, Lord, come to me by grace,
Which cannot come, it seems, by nature.
Thou knowest what a little I can bear;
That I am soon cast down,
When a slight wave of trouble rears its crest.
Let every trying trouble be made lovely and desirable to me, for Thy name sake.
For to endure and to be vexed for Thee
Is very helpful to my soul.

CHAPTER XX.

Of the Confession of our Weakness; and of the Troubles of this Life.

Sept. 5. I WILL confess against myself how far from just I am;
I will confess my weakness, Lord, to Thee.
Often a trifle cheats and saddens me
I *say* that I will act with bravery,

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But in a slight temptation
Great is my strait.
Often a very mean thing brings a grievous trial,
And, thinking I am safe—but for a little,
Feeling not the trouble,
I find my bark nigh wrecked by a slight gust of wind.

Look, Lord, upon my low estate, my frailty, known every way to Thee.

Pity and snatch me from the mire,
That I stick not fast in it,
And be not quite cast down for ever.
This often drives me, like an echo, back again,
Confuses me before Thee,—
I am so frail, so weak,
In fighting with my passions;
And if I do not wholly yield,
Yet they come after me, trouble, distress me,
And I grow very weary of this life of struggle.
I know my weakness well from this,
That the abominable phantoms hurry in more easily than they depart.

Sept. 6. O God of Israel, strong in strength, guard of the faithful soul, look down upon Thy servant's toil and grief;
Help him in all his goings,
Strengthen him with bravery from heaven
Lest the old man, the wretched flesh, prevail and lord it over me—
The flesh, not yet subdued unto the spirit,
Against which flesh I must needs fight
As long as in this wretched life I breathe.

II.

Sept. 7. Oh what a thing is life—
Sadness and trials never fail in it,

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And everywhere lie foes and snares;
For, as one trouble or temptation ebbs, another flows;
Yes, while the battle with the first still rages,
Others we thought not of throng on in crowds.

How can we love life,
Full of such bitterness as this?
How call it life—
Mother of plagues and death?
Yet it *is* loved,
And many seek delight in it.
Men often blame the world; "it is deceit and vanity;"
And yet they leave it with a struggle,
Because of fleshly lusts that are their kings.
Some things make men love it.
Lust of the flesh,
Lust of the eyes, the pride of life,
Draw men to its breast.
The penalties and miseries
That justly follow in their train
Make men hate it, make men sick of it.
But, sad it is, wicked delights still rule the world-given soul;
And the soul thinks it sweet to lie on thorns,
Because it never saw nor tasted *God's* sweetness and the pleasantness that virtue breeds within.

Sept. 8. But they who really scorn it all,
And try to live to God beneath some holy rule,
They know full well this heavenly sweetness, promised to all who truly give up all.
They see with brighter eyes
How grievously the world goes blundering on, cheated on every side.*

* Quam graviter mundus errat et varie fallitur.

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CHAPTER XXI.

Above all Goods, all Gifts, our Rest must be in God.

Sept. 9. ABOVE all, in all, thou, my soul,
Shalt alway rest in God;
He is the saints' eternal peace.

The Soul.

Grant me, sweet and loving Jesus, in Thee to rest above created things;
Above all health and beauty,
Power and dignity,
Knowledge and cleverness,
Riches and arts,
Joy and delight,
Fame and praise,
Sweetness and comfort,
Hope and promise,
Merit and longing,
Above all gifts and presents Thou canst give or pour on me;
Above all jubilation
That my mind can take or feel;
Indeed, above all angels and archangels, and all the army of the heaven;
Above all that I see and see not,
And above all where Thou art not, my God.

For Thou, O Lord my God, art best above them all,
Highest alone, alone most powerful,
Alone able to satisfy,
Fullest of all,

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Sweetest alone, alone most comforting,
Most beautiful, most loving,
Noblest and most glorious;
In Whom all good together is,
Is and ever was and shall be.
And therefore anything Thou givest me, apart from Thee,
It is too little for me, and it satisfies me not;
And anything Thou showest me of Thee or promisest,
Is not enough, if Thou art still unseen,
And not quite gained by me.
For my heart cannot truly rest, nor wholly be content,
Except it rest in Thee,
Passing all gifts
And all created things.

Sept. 10. O my loved spouse, Lord Jesus, my purest lover, lord of the whole creation's world,
Who would give me wings of liberty to fly to Thee and be at peace in Thee?
O when shall it be given me to be fully free, and see how sweet Thou art, O Lord my God?
When to the full I gather me to Thee,
And through Thy love lose sense of self,
And feel Thee only, above every sense and limit,
In a manner only known to few.
But now I often groan,
And carry my unhappiness in grief,
For much comes on me in this vale of misery, that troubles, clouds, and saddens me,
Hinders, distracts me,
Entangles me, allures me,
That I cannot with freedom come to Thee,
Enjoying sweet embraces that are ever ready for the spirits of the blest.

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Sept. 11. Let my sighing move Thee, and my varied desolation upon earth.
Jesus, the splendour of eternal glory,
The comfort of the wandering soul,
My mouth is voiceless before Thee,
My silence speaks to Thee.
How long delays my Lord His coming?
Let Him come to me, poor weakling,
And let Him make me glad,
Putting His hand out,
Snatching a wretch from every trouble,
Come, oh come,
For without Thee no day, no hour is happy.
Thou art my joy,
And without Thee my table empty lies.
I am poor and in a way imprisoned, and bound down by fetters
Until Thou refresh me with the light that shines from Thee, and givest me the gift of liberty,
Showing me Thy friendly face.
Others may seek instead of Thee
Whate'er they will;
Me, till I die, nothing can please,
Save Thee, my God, my hope,
Eternal safety.
I will not keep silence,
I will not cease to pray to Thee
Until Thy grace return to me,
And Thou speakest in my soul.

II.

(*In answer to the prayer Jesus appears and speaks.*)

Sept. 12. See, I am here.
I come to you,

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Because you called on Me.
Your tears, the longing of your soul,
Your humbleness, the sorrows of your heart,
Have brought Me down, have led Me near.

III.

The Soul.

And I said,
"Lord, I did call on Thee.
I wished for joy in Thee,
Ready to cast out all for Thee.
Thou didst come first and urgedst me
To look for Thee.
Blessed be Thou, O Lord,
So good unto Thy servant, according to the greatness of Thy pity.
What can I say more in Thy presence,
But humbly lay myself before Thee,
Mindful of my iniquity and worthlessness?
For there is none like Thee
Mid all the wonders of the heaven and earth.
Thy works are very good,
Thy judgments true,
And by Thy foresight all is ruled.
Praise then to Thee and glory,
O Wisdom of the Father;
Bless and praise Him, O my lips,
My soul and all things that are made."

CHAPTER XXII.

Calling to Mind the Many Kindnesses of God.

Sept. 13. OPEN my heart, O Lord, unfold Thy law.
Teach me to walk in Thy commandments.
Give me to understand Thy will,

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And with great reverence and diligent care to call to mind
Thy kindnesses, both one and all;
That thinking on them I may worthily give thanks to Thee.
But I know it, I confess it, that I cannot pay the debt I
owe for the least jot of all.*
Less am I than all the good things given me;
I think on Thy nobility,
And my heart faints before its greatness.

II.

Sept. 14. All that we have, body and soul,
Outside, within, from nature or from heaven,
Is but Thy bounty.
All shows Thee kind and good and pitiful,
From Whom all blessings come.

One may get more, another less;
Yet all is Thine.
Apart from Thee the smallest good cannot be held.

Sept. 15. The owner of the greater good may not boast him of his
merit,
Nor lord it over others,
Nor exult above the lesser one;
For *he* is greater, *he* is better
Who puts down less unto himself,
And shows his piety and humbleness in giving thanks.
The man who holds himself viler than all, unworthier than
all,
Is fitter to receive the greater blessing.

Yet he who gets the fewer gifts
Must not be sad nor angry
In envy of the rich;

* Pro minimo puncto.

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But rather look to Thee, and praise Thee for Thy goodness;
Because without regarding men
Thou showerest blessings down on them
So freely, fully, willingly.
All comes from Thee,
Therefore in all Thou must be praised.

III.

Sept. 16. Thou knowest what is fit for each,
Why one has less, another more;
Not ours to question this, but Thine,
With Whom each man's deserts are strictly watched.

Wherefore, Lord God, I think it a great blessing
Not to have much which outwardly seems worthy praise or glory,—as men judge of them;
So that when man thinks on his poverty and low estate,
He should not be disturbed, weighed down, dejected,
But comforted and very joyful;
For Thou hast chosen for Thy servants and familiar friends
The poor and humble, the rejected of the world.
Witness Thine apostles,
Whom Thou madest chief of all the earth.
They passed their lives without complaint,
So lowly and so simple,
Free from evil thought and guile,
Glad even to endure contempt for Thee.
All that the world hates they embraced with love.

Sept. 17. Naught, therefore, should so make Thy lover glad who knows Thy goodness to him,
As Thy will worked out in him, and the good pleasure of Thine eternal plan.
This ought to please and comfort him,

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And he should be as glad to be the least, as any one would be to be the greatest;
As restful and content far down the table* as in the highest seat;
Blest to be scorned, cast down,
No name, no glory his;
As pleased as if he were more honourable
And greater in the world than others.
For Thy good will, love of Thine honour should outweigh it all,
Comfort and please him more
Than any good that is or can be given him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Four Things that bring Peace.

God.

Sept. 18. MY son,
Now will I teach you what the way is
To peace and perfect liberty.

The Soul.

Do, Lord, as Thou sayest;
Sweet to me to hear.

God.

Try, My son, to love your neighbour's will and not your own.
Choose to have less, not more.
Look ever for the lowest place, subject to all.
Wish and pray
That God's will may be wholly done in you.
A man like this enters the land of peace and rest.

The Soul.

Thy words, O God, are few,

* In novissimo loco.

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Yet much perfection in them lies;
Short to be said,
But full of meaning, rich in fruit.
If they could only be kept faithfully by me,
Disturbing thoughts would not so lightly rise.
For, when I am not at rest, in heaviness,
I find I have gone back from this Thy teaching.
But Thou that canst do all, and ever lovest the profit of the soul,
Add greater grace to me,
That I may fill the measure of Thy words,
And perfect my salvation.

II.

A Prayer against Evil Thoughts.

Sept. 19. Lord God, go not far from me,
Look on me to my help;
For many musing thoughts, great fears, rise up in me,
Beating against my soul.
How can I pass through all unhurt?
How break their bond?

(*The Voice of God, answering.*)

I, saith He, will go before you,
And will lay low the boasters of the world,
Opening the prison doors,
Lifting the veil from secret mysteries.

(*The Prayer goes on.*)

Do, Lord, as Thou sayest,
And from Thy face fly every evil thought;
My hope, my only comfort, is
To fly to Thee in time of trouble;
To trust in Thee,
To call upon Thee from my inmost heart,
And quietly to wait for Thy consoling power.

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III.

A Prayer for Light to be thrown on the Mind.

Sept. 20. Lighten me, good Jesus, with the bright light within,
And from my heart's cell drive away all shadows.
Bridle my many wandering thoughts;
Fight bravely for me, conquer the evil beasts—
Enticing lusts, I mean,
That in Thy strength there may be peace,
And that Thy praise may evermore resound
Within Thy holy temple—
A conscience that is pure.
Sway the wind, the storm,
Say to the sea, "Be still;
Breathe not, wind of the north,"
And there shall be great calm.

Send out Thy light of truth, and shine upon the world.
I am the world, empty and void,
Till Thy light shine on me.
Pour down Thy grace on me,
Pour on my heart the dew of heaven,
Serve me with streams of piety,
Like channels cut upon earth's face,
To bring the good, the perfect fruit, to birth.
Raise high my mind sunk 'neath the weight of sin,
Fasten all my longings in the heaven,
That tasting of the sweetness of delight from there,
I may be slow to muse upon the things of earth.

Seize, snatch me from all fleeting creature-comfort;
For no created thing can give me all I want, quiet or comfort me.
Join me to Thee in the firm bond of love;
Thou art alone enough for him that loves Thee
The universe apart from Thee is but a sorry thing.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

Avoid a Curious Gaze into the Lives of Others.

God.

Sept. MY son,
Never be curious;
Carry not empty cares about with you.*
What is this or that to you?
Follow Me.
What is it to you, be your neighbour "this or that,"
Or if that other does and speaks "exactly as I say"?
You are not bound to answer for another,
You will have your own account to give.
Why then yourself entangle?
I know all men,
And all beneath the sun I see.
I know how 'tis with each,
All that he thinks,
All that he wishes,
And to what end his motives run.
Then all can be entrusted to My hand,
You—be restful; rest is good;
And let the busy man be busy as he will.
All he has done, all he has said, shall come upon him;
There is no cheating Me.

II.

Sept. 22. And have no care for a great name, mere shadow;
Seek not familiar friendship with the crowd,
Nor personal love with many.
This brings distraction,
And deep dark shadows in the heart.
I should be glad to speak My word to you,

* That is, the troubles of other folk.

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To lift the veil from hidden things,
If you would carefully wait for My coming,
Opening the gate that leads me to your heart.
Be prudent;
Watch and pray;
Be lowly in everything.

CHAPTER XXV.

In Whom True Peace of Heart exists, and Real Progress.

Jesus.

Sept 23. MY son,
I said, "My peace I leave you,
My peace I give to you.
Not as the world giveth give I unto you."
All long for peace,
But all care not for what really belongs to it.
My peace is with the humble and the kind in heart,
Yours shall be in great patience.
If you hear Me and follow where you hear,
You will enjoy deep peace.

The Soul.

What must I do then?

Jesus.

In everything look to yourself; see what you do or say,
And let every motive aim at this,
To please Me only;
Apart from Me wish nothing, ask for nothing;
Pass no rash judgments on your neighbours' words and deeds,
And tangle not yourself in what does not belong to you.

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Then will you be rarely and but little troubled.
But, never to feel any trouble,
Never to suffer pain of heart or body,
This belongs not to to-day;
It is a state of everlasting rest.

II.

Sept. 24. Think not, therefore, you have won it if you feel no heavy weight;
If you find no man against you,
Think not all is well;
Think not it is perfection,
If all goes according to your will;
And fancy not yourself some great one,
Or loved beyond all others,
If you enjoy devotion and sweet thoughts.
Not in such things is the true friend of virtue known;
Your progress and perfection are not found in these.

The Soul.

In what then, Lord?

Jesus.

In giving up yourself with all your heart unto God's will,
Not seeking what is yours, little or great,
In time or in eternity,
But ever giving thanks with one set face
In happy days and when all things go wrong;
Weighing all in an equal balance.
If you are so brave and so long-suffering in hope,
That, when the inward comfort is withdrawn,
You can prepare your heart to suffer worse,
Boasting not of your goodness, saying not
That you ought not to suffer such as this,

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But justifying Me in all My ways, and praising Me, the Holy One,
Then you are walking in the true, the upright way;
And hope past all doubt shall be yours,
That you shall see My face again with a wild cry of joy.
Nay, if you come to scorn yourself entirely,
Be sure you shall enjoy abounding peace, as far as it is possible for those that sojourn on the earth.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Height from which a Free Mind gazes down—a Mind gained, not by Reading, but by Humble Prayer.

Sept. 25. ONLY a perfect man, O Lord,
Can never let the mind relax from pressing onward to the things of heaven,
And pass through many cares as if without a care;
Not like a sluggard,
But by the virtue of the free mind's right,
Cleaving with unchecked affection unto none.

II.

Sept. 26. I pray Thee, God most pitiful,
Keep me from this life's cares,
That I be not too much tangled in them;
From the body's many needs,
That I be captured not by pleasure;
From all the stumblings of the soul,
That I be not cast down and broken with my trouble;
I do not mean from all the things which worldly vanity with all its might goes after,
But from the weighty miseries,

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Due to the common curse of man, laid upon him for punishment,
Which block the way before Thy servant's soul,
And keep it from the freedom of the Spirit
When it would enter in.

III.

Sept. 27. O God, my sweetness past all speech,
Turn to bitterness for me
All carnal comfort that draws me from the love of the eternal,
And wickedly allures me to itself by showing me some present charming blessing.
Let it not conquer me, my God,
Let it not conquer me,
My flesh and blood.
Let not the world and its brief glory cheat me;
Let not the devil and his cunning trip me up;
Grant me bravery to stand,
Patience to bear,
Constancy to persevere.
For all worldly consolation
Give me the sweet ointment of Thy Spirit,
And for the love of flesh love of Thy name.

Sept. 28. See. Food and drink and raiment,
And all the rest that goes to stay the body for a time,
Are only burdens to the fervent spirit.
Such comforts may I use all moderately,
And not be netted by a love of them.
I may not cast all off,
For nature must be fed;
But Thy holy law forbids me to ask for more than I may want, or for what pleases much.

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If 'twere not so, the flesh would rise in pride against the spirit.
Between the need and the delight
Let Thy hand guard and teach me—
Nothing too much.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Self-love especially keeps People back from what is Best.

God.

Sept. 29. MY son,
You must give all for all,
And not belong to self.
Your self-love harms you more, you know,
Than any other thing.
All more or less cleaves to you,
According to the love you feel for it.
Were your love pure and simple and well-ordered,
You would not be the slave of circumstance.

Lust not
For what you may not have;
Have not
What can impede your steps and rob you of your inner liberty.

'Tis a strange thing, you will not give yourself to Me,
From the very bottom of your heart,
With all that you can wish and have.
Why so torn with empty sorrow?
Why so tired with useless cares?
Stand by My good pleasure—
You shall feel no loss.

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Sept 30. If you seek this or that,
And would be here or there, as suits your own advantage and your own good will,
You will never be at rest,
Nor free from anxious care.
Because in everything some flaw will come,
And everywhere some one will rise against you.

It helps you not to gain and multiply your outward treasures;
Scorn them, uproot them from the heart, and cut them off,
Not only money-gathering do I mean, and wealth,
But honour and the love of empty praise.
As the world passes, they pass too.

Place protects you little
If the spirit of fervour is not there;
The rest you look for at your doors will not last long,
If the heart has no true foundation,
I mean, in Me.
Change yourself you may;
Better yourself you will not;
For if the chance come and you grasp it,*
You will find what you fled from—ay, and more.

II.

A Prayer to Purge the Heart: a Prayer for Heavenly Wisdom.

Oct. 1. Strengthen me, God, by Thy Holy Spirit's grace,
Grant that my virtue may be stablished in the inner man, or my heart freed from every useless care and grief,
Not drawn away with many a desire of aught—be it cheap or precious;

* That is, temptation.

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But let me look at all as passing shows,
Myself to pass as well.
For nothing stays under the sun,
Where all is vanity and trouble of spirit.
O wise is he who sees life thus.

Grant me, Lord, the heavenly wisdom, that I may learn to seek and find Thee above all, to taste and love Thee before all,
Understanding all things as they are according to the ordering of Thy wisdom.
Grant me to turn away from him that flatters me,
Quietly to bear with him that crosses me.
For this is the great wisdom—
Not to be moved with every windy word,
Not to give an ear unto the siren wickedly enticing us;
Then our early steps will lead to peace.*

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Against the Tongues of Slanderers.

God.

Oct. 2. MY son,
Take it not ill that some think badly of you,
And say what you dislike to hear;
You should believe *worse* stories of yourself,
And fancy none weaker than you.

If you walk within,
You will think little of flying words.
'Tis no small prudence to be silent in the evil time, and inwardly to turn to Me,
And not to be disturbed by what men think.

* Sic enim incepta pergitur via secure.

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II.

Oct 3. Your peace should not rest in the tongues of men,
Their guesses of you may be good or evil;
You are not therefore changed.

Where is true peace, real glory?
Is it not in Me?
He who cares not to please mankind, and fears not their displeasure,
Shall enjoy deep peace.
From unchecked love and empty fear
Arises all unquietness of heart,
And all distraction of the senses.

CHAPTER XXIX.

When Tribulation comes, God should be Called Upon and Blessed.

Oct. 4. THY name, O Lord, be blest for ever,
Who willedst that this trial and temptation should come on me.
I cannot get away from it,
But I must needs fly unto Thee,
To help me and to turn it unto good for me.

II.

O Lord,
Now I am in trouble,
And with my heart it is not well;
But I am much vexed by my present suffering.
And now, dear Father, what am I to say,
Caught in the snares?
"Save me from this hour?
But for this cause I came unto this hour,"

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That thou mightest be made glorious,
When I am really humbled and made free by Thee.
Be pleased, O God, to drag me forth;
For I am poor; what can I do?
Where go, apart from Thee?
Give patience, Lord,
For this one time.
Help me, my God,
And then I shall not fear, however great the burden.

Oct. 5. And now in this what can I say?
"Lord, if it be Thy will."
I have deserved the trouble and the burden,
I must bear them—
O for patience—
Until the storm pass and the day be better.
For Thine almighty hand can take even this trial from me,
Lessening its force, so that I yield not quite,
As Thou hast often done before with me,
My God, my pitiful One.
And the harder 'tis to me,
The easier 'tis to Thee—
This changing of the hand of the most High.*

CHAPTER XXX.

Asking for Help Divine; the Trust that we shall get God's Favour back again.

God.

Oct. 6. MY son,
I am the Lord that comforts you in time of trial;
Come unto Me,
When it is not well with you.

* That is, from sending sorrow to sending joy.

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This it is that most of all stands in the way of heavenly comfort,
That you come so slowly to your prayers.
For before you ask Me earnestly,
In the meantime you look for many a solace;
You feed yourself on things without,
And therefore all is little use to you,
Until you turn to Me: for I am He who raises those who hope in Me,
And outside Me is no help worth the name,
No useful counsel,
And no lasting cure.

But now the storm is gone; take breath again,
And in My pity's light come back to health;
For I am near, saith the Lord,
Making all things right again,
Nay, even increasing them, and adding blessings to them.
Is aught hard to Me?
Am I like one that speaks and will not do?
Where is your faith?
Stand firm,
And persevere;
Be longsuffering,
Be brave;
Comfort shall come to you in its own time.
Wait for Me, wait for Me,
And I will come and heal.

II.

Oct. 7. 'Tis temptation that annoys you,
'Tis empty dread that makes you fear.
What matters anxious care about the things that may come some day?
It only brings sorrow on sorrow.

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Let the day's trouble be enough for it;
It is a vain and useless thing to be disturbed or glad about
the things to come;
May be they never come.
But 'tis like man to be deceived by phantoms such as
this;
It is the mark of minds yet weak,
So lightly to be led at the suggestion of the enemy.
For he cares not whether he deludes and cheats you with
false words or with true,
Whether he lays you low with love of what you see,
Or with fear of all that is to come.
Let not your heart be troubled,
Neither let it be afraid.
Believe in Me,
And in My pity trust.
When you fancy you are very far from Me,
Often I am quite near.
When you think all well-nigh lost,
Closer follows your reward—a larger boon.
All is not lost
When things go contrary.
Judge not according to your present thought;
Receive not, cling not unto any trouble, whencesoe'er it
comes,
As though all hope were gone of rising from the wave.
Think not that you are wholly desolate,
Though for a time I may have sent you tribulation,
Or taken away the comfort that you longed for.
For thus we pass unto the kingdom of the skies.

And doubtless it is well for you and all My saints
To be tried by crosses,
And not have all things well.

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I know your thoughts in secret,
How it is good now and again for you to be without a taste of God,
That you be not puffed up in days when all is fair,
And take some pleasure in yourself that you are what you are not.
All that I gave I can take back,
And, when I will, restore it.
When I give it, it is Mine;
When I withdraw it, I have not taken yours.
For every good is Mine,
And every perfect gift;
And if I send a trouble to you, or some cross,
Be you not angry.
Keep a brave heart;
I can raise the weight from you,
And turn all burdens into joy.
Indeed, indeed, I am just,
And greatly to be praised,
When thus I deal with you.

Oct. 8. If you think rightly and look at things in truth,
You should never be so sad and so cast down about your woes.
Rather be glad, give thanks;
Nay, think this a peculiar joy,
That I strike you with the blow of sorrow, and that I spare you not.
As the Father loved Me,
I love you;
I said it to My dear disciples,
Whom of a truth I sent
To great strife, not to temporal joy;
To scorn, and not to honour;

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To work, and not to ease;
To bear much fruit in suffering, not to sleep.
Remember these My words, My son.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Neglect of Every Creature that the Creator may be Found.

The Soul.

Oct. 9. O LORD,
I sorely want till now a greater grace,
If I am to come thither,
Where none can hinder me, no creature stay me.

For, long as anything retains me,
I cannot freely fly to Thee.
He wished for it who said,
"Who will give me wings, as the doves have,
And I will fly away and be at rest?"
What stiller than the single eye,*
That longs for nothing on the earth?
What freer?
Then I should pass all creation by, and wholly desert self,
And stand in ecstasy of mind, and see
That Thou, Creator of all, hast in Thee nothing like Thy creatures.
And if one be not free from all creation,
He cannot freely aim at things divine.
Therefore indeed few musing souls are found;
For there are few that know how fully to seclude themselves from what is made and perishes.

* That is, a single eye makes one have this simple wish.

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For this great grace is wanted
To lift up the soul,
And hurry it beyond itself.

And, save the man be lifted up in spirit,
Freed from the world and wholly one with God,
All he knows,
And all he has,
Is of little weight.
He will long be little and lie low,
Who values aught as great except the one immeasurable eternal good.
And all that is not God is nothing,
And must be held for nothing.

There is great difference
Between the wisdom of a good bright soul
And the knowledge of a studious lettered cleric.
Far nobler is the teaching that drips down from the influence on high,
Than learning painfully acquired by human wit.

II.

Oct. 10. Many are found who love a quiet life,
But do not try to practise what is needed for it.
It stays us much that we should take our stand
In wonders and in things we feel,
With so few passions killed.

I know not what it is,
Or by what spirit we are led,
And what we mean, who, as it seems, are called religious,
That we should spend such toil, such great anxiety, for things that pass and are of little worth,

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And scarcely even now and then gather our senses up, and
muse upon our inner life.
Oh it is sad; we think a little, and at once we break away,
And never put our works into the scale and mark them
carefully,
Caring not where our love is,
Weeping not that everything is so impure.
All flesh had spoilt its way,
And the great flood followed.
Thus when our inward love is much corrupted,
It must needs be
That the act which follows, the sign how much we need
the strength within,
Should be corrupted too.
From a pure heart proceeds a good life's fruit.

Oct. 11. We ask how much a man has done;
But with what goodness it is done,
We weigh not that so carefully.
Was he brave, rich, fair and comely?
A good copyist, a good singer, a hard worker?
All this we ask.
But—was he poor in spirit?
Quiet and kind?
Pious, and a lover of the higher life?
We hold our tongues on this.
The life of man looks at the outward show;
Life touched by God turns its glance within.*
The former often fails;
The other, not to be deceived, puts all her hope in God.

* **Natura, gratia.** See page 278, chap. liv.

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CHAPTER XXXII.

Denying Self and giving up All Covetous Ways.

God.

Oct. 12. MY son,
You cannot have a perfect freedom
Except you wholly deny self.
Self-seekers and self-lovers are all bound in fetters,
Ambitious, curious, wandering like a rolling wheel,
Ever seeking ease, never seeking Jesus,
Often feigning and composing things of straw.*
For all their work shall perish;
It is not of God.

Keep in your memory a short and perfect saying,
"Lose all, find all;"
"Cease your longings, find your rest."
Think well on this,
Fulfil it; you shall understand it then.

II.

The Soul.

Lord,
This is no mere day's work;
This is no child's play—nay,
In this brief word all the perfection lies of those who take the vows.

III.

God.

Oct. 13. My son, you should not turn away, nor be at once cast down,
When hearing of the pathway of the just;

* Quod non stabit.

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You should be spurred to higher flights,
Or, at least, sigh and long for them.

I would it were thus with you, that you had come to this,
To be no lover of yourself,
Standing simply at the beck
Of Me and of the monk I placed as father over you.
Then you would please Me very much,
And all your life would pass in peace and joy.
You have much still to leave,
And if you do not give it all to Me,
You will not gain your boon.

I counsel you to buy of Me gold tried by fire
To make you rich; I mean, a heavenly wisdom,
That stamps to nothing what is low.
Put earthly wisdom by,
And all complacency with men and self.

Lo, I have told you: buy the more valueless,*
Leaving the precious and the lofty among human things.
The wisdom from on high is very valueless and small,
Well nigh given over to forgetfulness;
Nor is he wise that thinks great things of self,
And tries to be made much of on the earth.
How many preach this with their lips;—
Far from it are their lives.
Yet 'tis the pearl of price, hidden from many.

* That is, heavenly wisdom (satirically).

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CHAPTER XXXIII.

The Wavering of the Heart: the Final Motive leading up to God.

God.

Oct. 14. MY son, trust not your present wishes;
They will soon change.
You will be the slave of life-long fickleness,
Though you wish it not.
Now glad, now sad;
Now restful, now disturbed;
Now pious, now unthoughtful;
Now given to work, now full of sloth;
Now grave, now light.

II.

But high above these things that change is the wise man with spirit well taught,
Who cares not what he feels,
Nor from what quarter blows the shifting breeze,
If but the holy motive of his mind go onward to the due and longed-for end.
For thus will he be able to remain the same, unshaken,
Pointing the simple eye of motive
Through many changing chances straight at Me.

The purer that this eye of motive is,
The straighter sails the vessel through the many storms.

But it is dim in many men,
For men soon look aside at anything delightsome,
And rarely is one found quite free from the self-seeking stain.
So in old days the Jews had come to Bethlehem,—

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Not for Jesus only,
But to look on Lazarus.
Therefore, the eye of motive must be cleansed, that it be single and good,
And, beyond all that lies between, be levelled straight at Me.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

To One who loves God, there is—in all, over all—the Taste of God.

Oct. 15. LO, my God, my all,
What wish I more?
What happier thing can I desire?
O sweet and tasteful word,
To him who loves the Word,
And not the world and all that is therein.

My God, my all,—
Enough for him that understands,—
Sweet for the lover to say it over and again.
For in Thy presence all is sweet;
When Thou art gone,
All spoils.
Thou makest the heart quiet; Thine is peace
And festal joy.
Thou makest it think well of all, praise Thee in all;
Nothing can please it long apart from Thee.
But if aught is to be sweet or pleasant,
Thy grace must be there too,
It must be seasoned with the seasoning of Thy wisdom.
To whom Thou tastest sweet,
What will not be sweet to him?

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And what can give him pleasure
With whom the taste of Thee is not?

Oct. 16. But the world's philosophers and they that taste the flesh fail in Thy philosophy.
There is many a vanity;
There men find death.
But they who follow Thee in scorn of all the world, and seek the death of flesh,
Are known to be philosophers indeed,
Because they go from vanity to truth, from flesh to soul.
God tastes sweet to them,
And all the good they find in His creation
They put down to the builder's praise.
Wide, wide apart the savour of Creator and created,*
As of eternity and time,
A candle and the uncreated beam.

II.

Oct. 17. O blaze that shines for ever,
High above all the fires of earth,
Lighten in flashes from above,
Finding a way into the secret chambers of my heart.
Make pure,
Make glad,
Make clear, make quick my spirit and its powers
To cleave to Thee in wild excess of joy.
O when shall come that blest, that longed-for hour,
When Thou wilt feed me with Thy presence,
Be all in all to me?
Till this be given to me my joy will not be full.

* Dissimilis tamen et multum dissimilis sapor creatoris et creaturæ
Æternitatis et temporis
Lucis increatæ et illuminatæ.

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Sad, sad—yet still the old man lives in me,
He is not really crucified,
He is not really dead,
He fiercely lusts against the spirit still,
He stirs the war within,
He will not let the kingdom of the soul be quiet.

Oct. 18. But Thou, Lord of the mighty sea, smoother of the heaving waves,
Arise and help.
Scatter the people that delight in war,
Bruise them in Thy power,
Show, I pray, Thy mighty deeds,
Let Thy right hand be crowned with glory.
There is for me no hope, no haven,
Save in Thee, O Lord, my God.

CHAPTER XXXV.

No Safety from Temptation all through Life.

God.

Oct. 19. MY son,
You are not ever safe in life,
Long as you live you need the spiritual armour,
Ever amid foes,
Assaulted right and left.

If then you do not use the shield of patience,
You will not stay unwounded long.
Again, unless you put your heart in Me and keep it there,
With single wish to go through all for Me,
You will not keep that ardour up,
Nor win the palm-branch of the blest.
You ought to pass through all things like a man,
Baring a powerful hand against opposition.

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For unto him that overcometh manna is given,
And to the sluggish one is left deep misery.

II.

Oct. 20 If you look for rest in life,
How will you come to the eternal rest?
Set not yourself to win deep peace,
But to be very patient.
Seek true peace in the heavens, not on the earth,
Not among men, nor in the rest of the creation,
But in God alone.

For God's love you ought willingly to go through all,
Toil and pain,
Temptation, vexing cares, anxieties and needs, weaknesses,
injuries and evil words, blame and humiliation,
Scorn, confusion, and correction.
These are the aids to virtue,
These prove the neophyte of Christ,
These weave the heavenly wreath.
I will give back eternal pay for your brief toil;
For the confusion of the hour, unending glory.

III.

Oct. 21. Think you you will always have the comfort to the spirit
just as you desire?
My saints did not.
They had many troubles, varied trials,
And often were left desolate;
But they kept quiet throughout all,
Trusting God and not themselves,
Knowing that the sufferings of this present time are not
to be compared unto the glory to be gained in
days to be.

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Would you have that *now*,
Which many men have scarcely gained with floods of tears
and after weary toil?

Wait then for God and play the man;
Be comforted;
Do not despair; do not desert;
But firmly for God's glory offer body and soul.
I will pay back all the debt,
In every trial standing at your side.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Against Men's Vain Opinions.

God.

Oct. 22. MY son,
Rest your heart firmly in the Lord,
Fearing not the judgment passed by men,
If your conscience tells you you are innocent and good.

It is a great, a blessed thing to suffer thus;
'Tis no hard thing unto the humble heart,
That trusts in God rather than in itself.
Many talk much,
And little faith is to be placed in it;
And to content all
Is impossible.

Even though Paul tried hard to please all men in God,
Becoming everything to every man,
Yet he thought it very trifling to stand before the judgment-
bar of man.
He did enough, all that he could, to build up others and
to save their souls.
But judgment now and then, and scorn from others,

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He could not have prevented.
Therefore he trusted all to God, God that knew all,
And in quiet and humility maintained his cause, against the unfair lips,
The empty lying thoughts, the words they hurled upon him as they pleased.
Yet he did answer now and then,
That the weak should not be offended if he held his peace.

II.

Oct. 23. And who are *you*,
That you should fear a mortal man?
To-day he is,
To-morrow he is not seen.
Fear God;
You will not shudder at the terrors man can show.
What can man do to you by words or injuries?
He hurts himself, not you;
Nor can he, be he who he may, escape God's judgment.
Keep God before your eyes;
Fight not against man's querulous words,
And if just now you seem to be brought low,
And to be suffering a confusion that you did not merit,
Be not angry;
Take not a flower from your wreath by your impatience;*
But rather look to Me in heaven,
For I can snatch you out of every wrong and trouble,
And give to every man according to his deeds.

* Neque per impatientiam minuas coronam tuam.

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CHAPTER XXXVII.

A Pure and Simple Resignation to get the Freedom of the Heart.

God.

Oct. 24. MY son,
Leave self,
You shall find Me.
Take your place—no choosing it—no saying, "This is mine,"
And you shall always gain;
For fuller favour shall be added to you,
The moment you resign yourself,
If you keep so.

II.

The Soul.

Lord, how oft must I resign myself,
And in what leave myself?

God.

Always; in every hour,
In small things and in great.
I except nothing;
Always would I find you bare of self;
Else how can you be Mine or I be yours,
Unless you spoil yourself, within, without, of all self-will?
The sooner this is done the better it will be for you;
The fuller and the more sincerely done,
The more you will please Me,
The greater will your profit be.

Oct. 25. Some do renounce themselves,
Making exceptions.
They do not wholly trust in God,
And have their hands full in providing for themselves

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Some offer even the whole at first,
But afterwards, when beaten by temptation, return unto "their own."
Thus they make very little way on the good road.
These will never get to the pure heart's true freedom,
And to the favour of My close and pleasant friendship,
Save by perfect resignation and by a daily sacrifice first made;
Apart from which no union of delight can last.

III.

Oct. 26. I have often said to you,
And now again I say it,
Leave yourself,
Resign yourself;
You shall enjoy great inward peace.
Give all for all,
Seek nothing for it,
Ask for nothing back;
You shall possess Me,
You shall be free in heart,
The darkness shall not tread you down.
Strive for this,
Pray for this,
Long for this,
That you be spoiled of all self-seeking, a naked soul following the naked soul of Jesus,
To die unto yourself
And live for ever unto Me.
Then shall all vain phantoms fail,
All unfair disturbances,
All superfluous cares,
Immoderate fear shall ebb away,
Ill-ordered love shall die.

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CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A Good Rule in Externals: Recourse to God in Danger.

God.

Oct. 27. MY son,
You should aim carefully at this,
In every place, action, or business of the world to be free at heart and master of yourself.
All is to be 'neath you, not you 'neath it,
And you the lord and ruler of your actions,
No slave nor chattel;
But rather free and a true Hebrew,
Marching to the appointed lot and liberty of the sons of God,
Who stand above the present world
And gaze on the eternal,
Looking on passing shows with the left eye, and with the right on God.
The things of time draw them not on to cleave to them;
They rather draw these things into a goodly service,
As they were ordained of God, appointed by the Workman,
Who has left nothing vague in His creation.

II.

Oct. 28. If too in every chance
You stand not still and say, "It looks thus to me,"*
Nor look with the eye of flesh on what you see and hear,
But soon, whatever be the cause, enter with Moses to the tabernacle and there take counsel of God,
Sometimes you will hear the heavenly answer,
And will go home learned in much that is and much that is to be.

* Stas non in apparentia externa.

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For Moses always hurried there to solve his doubts and questionings,
And fled unto the help of prayer to lessen perils and to bear the wickedness of man.
So you too must hurry to the secret chamber of your heart,
Imploring aid from heaven with earnestness.
It was for this that Joshua and Israel's sons were cheated, we are told, by them of Gibeon,
Because they did not first ask of the lips of God;
But, too credulous of dulcet words,
They were deceived by a false piety.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Man must not be Too Eager in His Business.

God.

Oct. 29. MY son,
Ever trust your case to Me,
I will arrange it in its time.
Wait for My ordering of it,
And you will feel the good of it.

The Soul.

Lord, willingly I yield all things to Thee,
For my own musings are of slight avail.
I would I clave not so to what is coming,
But gave myself, all hesitation gone, to Thy good will.

II.

God.

My son, man often eagerly pursues some thing he longs for,

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But when he comes to it,
He slowly changes what he felt;
For his affections do not always circle round the same,
But drive him on from one unto another.
No trifle is it then even in trifles to abandon self.

Man's real progress
Is in self-denial.
A self-denying man
Is very free and safe,
But the old enemy, opposing all the good we do, is never slow to tempt us,
And day and night sets his strong snares
To try and make the careless stagger into his deceptive net.
"Watch ye and pray," thus saith the Lord,
"That ye enter not into temptation."

CHAPTER XL.

Man has no Good of Himself, and can Boast of None.

Oct. 30. "LORD, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him?
Or the son of man, that Thou dost visit him?"
What has man merited,
That Thou shouldst give Thy grace to him?
And how can I complain if Thou desert me?
Or what can I put forward if Thou dost not what I ask?
Lord, I am nothing,
I can do nothing,
Have nothing good of my own self.
In all I fail;
I ever tend to naught.

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When I am not helped by Thee and inwardly instructed,
I become wholly cool and lax.

But Thou, O Lord, art always as Thou wast and ever art,
Good and just and holy,
Well, justly, and in holy ways performing all;
But I, who readier am to fall away than to go forward,
Never can last in one condition,
"For seven times change over me."
Still, 'twill be better soon, when it shall be Thy will,
And Thou hast stretched Thy hand to help me; for Thou alone canst help without a word from man.
Thou canst strengthen me so much
That my face shall no more turn to different things,
But that to Thee alone my heart shall wheel and be at rest.

Wherefore if I only knew how to cast aside all human comfort,
Either to gain devotion,
Or for the need that makes me bound to look to Thee
Because there is no man to comfort me,
Then I could really hope for something of Thy grace,
Exulting in the gift of a fresh comfort.

II.

Oct. 31. Thanks be to Thee, from Whom all comes,
As oft as it goes well with me.

But I am vanity and nothing before Thee,
A man inconstant, weak;
What can I boast of?
Or why seek to be thought much of?
Can anything from nothing come,*
And this nothing very vain?

* Numquid de nihilo?

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Truly empty glory is an evil pest,
The chief of vanities,
That draws us from the glory that is true
And robs us of the grace of heaven.
Man pleases self, displeases God.
Gaping to swallow human praise,
He robs himself of real virtues.

It is true glory, holy exultation,
To boast in Thee and not in self,
In Thy name to rejoice,
Not in one's own worth,
And in no created thing to take our pleasure, but in Thee.

Praise to Thy name,
Not mine;
Thy work be glorified,
Not mine;
Thy holy name be blessed,
And nothing of the praise of man set down to me.
Thou art my glory, Thou the exultation of my heart;
In Thee I will exult and boast myself the livelong day;
But in myself for nothing,
Save for my weaknesses.

III.

Nov. 1. Let Jews require the glory given by men to one another,
I will ask that which comes from God alone.
All from man,
All honour of the world,
All lofty places there,
Set over against Thine everlasting glory,
Are but vanity and folly.
My Truth, my Pity, and my God, O Blessed Trinity,
To Thee alone be praise and honour, virtue, fame,
Through the unending ages of the ages.

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CHAPTER XLI.

Scorn of all Temporal Honour.

God.

Nov. 2. MY son, let it not hurt you
When you see others raised on high and honoured,
While you are scorned and brought down low.
Lift up your heart to Me in heaven,
And man's scorn on the earth will never make you sad.

II.

The Soul.

Lord, we are in blindness,
Soon are we led away by vanity.

If I am just and look within,
Never has wrong been done to me by anything created,
That I should justly utter a complaint of Thee.
But, as I frequently and heavily have sinned against Thee,
All creation is in arms against me; and I merit it.
To me then the just due is scorn and shame,
And to Thee praise, honour, and glory.
And if I do not make myself ready for this—willingly to be despised and left by all created things,
And really to seem nothing,
I cannot inwardly attain a peaceful and a quiet mind,
Be lighted with the spiritual flame, nor fully bound to Thee.

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CHAPTER XLII.

Our Peace is not to be in Human Keeping.

God.

Nov. 3. MY son,
If you put your peace with any one because you live with him and think as he does,*
You will be wavering and entangled.
Betake yourself unto the truth that ever lives, that ever stays;
Then partings and the death of friends shall never sadden you.
Love for your friend should have its root in Me,
And every one that here seems good to you and very dear,
Should, *for My sake*, be loved.
Apart from Me friendship is nothing, cannot last,
And there is no pure love, nor true,
Where I join not the lovers.

II.

Nov. 4. So dead you should be unto such affections for beloved ones,
That you should wish to be without human companionship as far as it may be;
The farther that a man goes back from every earthly solace,
The more the man draws near to God.
The deeper that a man goes down into himself,
The cheaper that he grows in his own sight,
The higher he goes up towards God.
But he who puts down any good to self,
Hinders the grace of God from coming in on him;
For the Holy Spirit's grace doth always seek a humble heart.

* Propter tuum sentire et convivere.

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If you would wholly bring yourself to nothing,
And free yourself from all created love,
Then would I drop the dews of great grace on you.
When you glance back upon the creature,
You lose the sight of the Creator.
Learn in all things to overcome yourself for the Creator's sake,
And then you will soon reach unto the knowledge of your God.
If you will love and look upon a thing excessively, small though it be,
It keeps you back from what is high: it spoils you.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Against Vain and Worldly Knowledge.

God.

Nov. 5. SON,
Let not men's fair and subtle speech disturb you.
God's kingdom is not talk,
But power.
Hark to My words; for they set hearts on fire and flood the mind with light.
They make men very sorry; on all sides they bring balm.

Never read a word
To seem more wise and learned.
Try to make your vices dead,
This will avail you more than if you knew many hard questions.
Read much, learn much,
Yet you must always come to one beginning—
I am He
That teaches man knowledge.

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I give a clearer understanding to the little ones
Than can be given by man.
To whom I speak, he soon is wise,
And makes much progress on the spirit's way.
Woe unto them who ask of men their curious questions,
Caring but little for the way of serving Me.
A time will be when Christ shall come, the masters' Master
and the angels' Lord,
To hear how all men read,—
I mean, to try the consciences of all.
Then will He search Jerusalem with lanterns,
And the secrets of the darkness shall be clear,
And wrangling tongues shall cease.

II.

Nov. 6. I, even I, lift even in a flash the simple mind
To understand more ways of the eternal truth
Than if a man had studied in the schools ten years.

I teach without the buzz of words,
Without the conflict of opinions,
Without the pride of place,*
Without the battle-shout of arguments.

I teach men to despise the earth, to loathe the things
before their eyes,
To look to the eternal,
To taste of the eternal,
To fly from honours,
To suffer opposition,
To put all hope in Me,
To want nothing beyond Me,
And above all to love Me zealously.

* That is, I am not proud of being a Teacher.

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One learnt the lesson of God,*
And spoke wondrous things,
By intimate love of Me;
More profiting in leaving all
Than in the study of subtleties.

But unto some I speak words fit for all; to others special words;
To some I sweetly show Myself in signs and figures;
For some I tear the veil from mysteries in floods of light.
There is one voice in books,† and yet they teach not all men equally,
Because I am within them, the Truth, the Teacher, looking closely at the heart, knowing the thoughts,
Leading on to action,
Dealing to each as I deem fit.

CHAPTER XLIV.‡

No Drawing to Ourselves of Outward Things.

God.

Nov. 7. MY son,
In much you must be ignorant,
And count yourself as dead upon the earth,
And one to whom the world is crucified.
Much you must pass by with deadened ear,
And rather think
On what is for your peace.
Better for you to turn your eyes away

* Is he thinking of himself?

† That is, in the books read by the Brotherhood.

‡ This chapter and the next are written in by a later and clumsier hand. The rest of the MS. is in Thomas Kempis' own handwriting.

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From things you do not like,
And let each have his own opinion,
Than be the slave to quarrelling words.
If you stand well with God,
Having His judgment set before you,
You will more easily endure defeat.

II.

The Soul.

O Lord,
To what pass are we come.
See how we moan about a temporal loss,
And for a trifling gain we run about and work;
But the soul's loss passes by and is forgotten,
And comes back to our thoughts well nigh too late.
That which is of little use,
Or of no use, we seek after,
And that which over all is necessary
We pass by without care;
Because man's being flows away to the external,
And if he do not quickly come unto himself
He is contented to lie there.

CHAPTER XLV.

Not all Men may be Trusted. How Easily we Slip in Talk.

Nov. 8. GRANT me help, Lord, from trouble;
Vain is the help of man.
How often have I found no faith
Where I thought I should,
And found it where I less expected it.
Vain then is hope in man;

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In Thee, Lord, is the safety of the just.
Blessed be Thou, O Lord my God,
In all that happens unto us.

We are weak, unsteady,
We soon fail and change.
What man is he
That can so carefully and cautiously in all things guard himself,
As not sometimes to meet with some deceit or tangle?
But he who trusts in Thee, O Lord,
And seeks Thee with a simple heart,
Falls not so easily.
And if he does slip with some distress,
However closely he may get involved,
Soon shall he be drawn out
And comforted by Thee,
Because Thou wilt not leave for ever the man that hopes in Thee.

Rare is the faithful friend,
Holding on in all a friend's adversities.
Thou, Lord,
Thou art the only one,
Trustiest in all;
None else beside Thee, none.

II.

Nov. 9. O how wise that holy soul,
Who said,
"My mind is firmly founded,
Rooted in Christ."
If it were so with me,
No fear of man would easily disturb me,
Nor should the javelins of his words distress me.

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Who can see all beforehand?
Who can beware of coming woes?
If the ills we foresee hurt us,
What can the unforeseen ones do but fiercely strike us?
But why have I not provided better in my misery?
Why have I lightly trusted others?
Well, we are men,
Naught but frail men,
Though many think us angels—ay, and call us so.

Whom may I trust, O Lord,
Whom,
Save Thee?
Thou art the truth,
Deceiving not;
And not to be deceived.
And again—every man is lying,
Weak, unstable,
So ready in his words to slip,
That what sounds right, looks right,
Ought scarce to be believed at once.

Nov. 10. How wisely hast Thou warned us to beware of men,
That a man's foes are his own household,
And that we must not listen when they say, "See, He is here; see, He is there."
I have learned the lesson to my loss;
Would that it led me on to greater care, and not to folly.
"Take care," one says, "take care,
Keep what I tell you to yourself;"
And, while I hold my tongue and think the secret kept,
He cannot keep what he asked me to keep,
Betrays himself and me,—and off he goes.

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From such tales, from such careless men, deliver me,
O Lord, that I fall not into their hands,
Nor ever do the like.
Give me a true word and a firm one in my lips;
Take from me a cunning tongue,
For what I would not have done unto *me*,
I ought in every way to shun.

III.

Nov. 11. How good it is, what quietness it brings,
To keep silence about others,
And not to credit everything alike,
Nor lightly to continue talking;
To show oneself to few,
To seek for Thee that gazest deep into the heart;
Not to be blown about with any windy word,
But to long that all our inner and our outer course may be
fulfilled according to Thy will.

How safe it is, if we would keep God's favour,
To shun the world's "appearances,"
And not to seek what seems to win approval from without,
But with all carefulness to follow after all that gives zeal
to life and betters it.
How many have been hurt when men have got to know
their worth and praised them;
How many have been profited by grace in silence kept
through this frail life,
This life, "all toil and war."

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CHAPTER XLVI.

The Trust we ought to have in God when Weapons of the Tongue rise up against Us.

God.

Nov. 12. MY son,
Stand firm and hope in Me.
For what are words but words?
They fly through air,
But do not hurt a stone.
If you are guilty,
Think—you would wish to mend yourself.
If you are conscious of no wrong,
Think—you would willingly bear this for God.
Little enough for you to bear words now and then;*
You cannot yet stand sturdy blows.

And why do such small things pierce to the heart,
If you are not still of the flesh,
And think of men more than you should?
For as you would not be despised,
You do not want blame for your faults,
And seek the petty shadows of excuses.
Look within you deeper still,
And you will see the world yet living there,
And the vain love to please mankind.
For as you shun to be brought low
And put to shame for your defects,
It is quite clear you are not truly humbled,
Nor really dead unto the world,
Nor the world crucified to you.

Nov. 13. But hear My word;

* That is, you deserve *blows:* why then mind mere words?

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You will not heed ten thousand words of man.
Think—if all were said against you that could most maliciously be feigned,
What would it hurt you?
If you let it all go by,—
Not worth a straw to you,—
Could it pull even a hair from you?

But he who keeps no hold upon his heart, and has not God before his eyes,
Is lightly moved with words of cursing;
While he that trusts in Me, and does not long to stand by his opinion of himself,
Shall be free from fear of man.
For I am judge of all,
I know all secrets,
I know how sins are done,
I know the one who does the wrong,
And him that suffers it.
"That word"* went forth from Me,
"That" happened and I let it go,
That "thoughts in many hearts might be revealed."
I will judge the guilty and the innocent,
But I wished even before to prove them both by secret tests.
Man's evidence often misleads,
The sentence that I pass is true.
It shall stand, and shall not be o'erthrown.
Mostly hidden, it lies clear now and then to few,
Yet it is never wrong, and never can be,
Though it may seem so to the eyes of fools.

Nov. 14. To Me then you must come in every judgment.
You must not lean on what you think of it,
For the just man will not be troubled,

* That is, what you are complaining of.

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Whatever comes to him from God;
And though an unjust charge be brought against him,
Will not care much;
Nor will he shout in empty joy,
If others sensibly acquit him of it.
For he considers how that I am He that looks into the heart and reins,
And often in My eyes that is condemned
Which men think fit to praise.

II.

The Soul.

Nov. 15. Lord God, just Judge, brave and longsuffering,
Who knowest the frailty and wickedness of men,
Be my protection, all my trust;
My conscience fails me.
Thou knowest what I do not know.
Therefore, when blamed, I should have humbled self and borne it quietly,
And, often as I have not,
Pardon me in Thy mercy;
And give me grace to bear more suffering another time.
For Thine abundant pity gives more hope for pardon,
Than when my conscience does not speak, and I hold up my own ideas of justice;*
And if I know of no wrong done,
Yet in that I cannot justify myself;
Because, without Thy pity, "none that lives shall be called just before Thee."

* Melior est enim mihi tua copiosa misericordia ad consecutionem indulgentiæ
Quam mea opinata justitia pro defensione latentis conscientiæ.
(Even the voice of conscience is not strong enough to tell us of our faults.)

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CHAPTER XLVII.

Any Troubles must be Borne for Everlasting Life.

Jesus.

Nov. 16. MY son,
Be not broken by the toilsome burdens borne for Me,
Nor cast down wholly by the tribulations.
Be always strengthened and consoled by what I promise,
I can repay you past all manner and measure.

You shall not toil here long,
Always weighed down with grief.
Wait awhile,
You will soon see the evil's end.
An hour will come,
And all the work and noise shall stop.
What passes by with time
Is small and brief.

Do your deed,
Work faithfully among the vines,
I will be your wages.
Write, read, and sing,
Groan, pray, keep silence,
Bear crosses bravely,—
Eternal life is worth all this and greater battles.
In one day peace shall come; God knows how soon.
Then neither day nor night shall be,
But light eternal and unending beauty,
Firm peace, sure rest.
You shall not then say, "Who shall free me from the body of this death?"

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You shall not cry, "Ah, my stay here is so long."
For death shall be thrown down;
There shall be health that cannot fail,
No troubles,
Blessed joy,
Sweet, comely company.

II.

Nov. 17. O, had you seen the everlasting wreaths worn by the saints in heaven,
How gloriously they shout for joy,
Who once were here thought scorn of, and as it were unworthy of life,
You would, I know, bow to the earth,
And rather try to be below the rest, than to be lord of one.
You would not lust for joyful days in life,
But would be rather glad to suffer for God,
And think it mighty gain to pass for nothing among men.
If all this touched you and went deeply to your heart,
How would you dare once to complain?
Are not all toilsome things worth bearing for eternal life?
It is no little thing
To win or lose God's kingdom.

Then lift your eyes on high,
See,
I and my saints with Me,
Who in this world have had great strife.
Now they are glad,
Now they are comforted,
Now they are safe at rest,
And for ever in My Father's kingdom shall abide with Me.

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CHAPTER XLVIII.

The Eternal Day: the Straits of this our Life.
(*A Rhapsody of the Soul.*)

Nov. 18. O BLESSED mansion of the realms above,
Day of eternity so bright,
The day that night ne'er darkens,
On which high truth for ever sheds its gleam,
Day ever joyful, ever safe,
Never changing into darkness.
O that that day had burst on us,
And all the things of time had met their end.
Yet to the saints it shineth brilliant in its beauty,
But to the wanderers on earth only from far and through a mirror.
Well know the citizens of heaven its joy,
The exiles, sons of Eve, groan o'er their long and bitter waiting here.

The days of this our time are few and evil,
Full of sorrow and of troubles,
Where man by many a sin is stained,
By many a passion snared,
With many a fear convulsed,
With many a care constrained,
With many an anxious thought distressed,
Folded in many vanities,
Girded with many errors,
Worn with toil, weighted with trial,
Weakened with luxury,
Tortured by want.

O when shall be the end of all these evils?
And when shall I be free of wretched slavery to vice?

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When call to mind Thee only, Lord,
And when rejoice my fill in Thee?
When shall I be quit of hindrance,
Really set free without a weight on mind or body?
When shall solid peace come to me, peace that cannot be broken, within, without,
Firm on all sides?
When shall I, good Jesus, stand to look on Thee,
And muse upon the glory of Thy kingdom?
When wilt Thou be all in all to me?
And when shall I be with Thee in Thy sovereignty,
Prepared for Thy beloved from eternity?
I am left poor and exiled in a foeman's land,
Where there is daily war
And great misfortune.

II.

Nov. 19. Comfort my exiled state,
Lessen my grief,
For all my longing soul sighs up to Thee,
All that this world offers me as comfort
Is a mere burden to me.

I would enjoy Thee inwardly,
Yet I cannot grasp Thee.
I long to cleave to heavenly things,
But things of time and passions not yet dead oppose me.
In mind I would be lord of all,
But by my flesh against my will I am bound down to slavery.
So I, unhappy man, am fighting with myself;
I have become a trouble to myself;
The spirit longs to be on high, the flesh below.
O what I suffer within me while with the mind I handle things of heaven,

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And, even as I pray, a crowd of fleshly things comes o'er me.

Nov. 20. Go not far from me, O my God,
Turn not away in anger from Thy servant.
Flash forth Thy lightning, scatter them,
Shoot out Thine arrows and confuse the foeman's phantom ranks.
Call home my senses unto Thee,
Make me forget all worldly things,
Let me quickly cast aside and spurn the wicked dreams.*
Help me, eternal Truth,
That no vanity may carry me away.
O come, celestial sweetness,
And from Thy face let all uncleanness fly.

Pardon me, forgive me, of Thy pity,
When in my prayer I think of other things but Thee.

For I confess the truth;
I am accustomed to be much distracted,
Often I am not
Where my body stands or sits,
But I am rather there
Where I am borne upon the wings of thoughts.
Where my thoughts are, there am I,
And my thoughts are often
Where lies what I love.
That often comes across my mind,
Which naturally pleases or from habit suits me;
Wherefore Thou the Truth didst plainly say,
"Where your treasure is,
There will your heart be also."
If I love heaven,

* Phantasmata vitiorum.

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Willingly I ponder heavenly things.
If I love the world,
I am happy when the world is happy,
And sad at its adversities.
If I love the flesh,
I often conjure up its forms before me.
If I love the spirit,
I love to muse on spiritual things.
Whate'er I love,
Of that I like to talk and hear,
And carry pictures of such things home with me.

But blessed is the man
Who, for Thy sake, O Lord, bids every creature pack,
Treats nature violently,
And in a spiritual fervour nails the lusts of flesh upon a cross
To offer Thee a prayer that shall be pure when the sky of conscience is no longer clouded;
And to be fit to join in angel hymns,
All earthly cries barred out, around him or within.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Desire for Life Eternal: all that is Promised unto those that Fight.

God.

Nov. 21. MY son,
Since you feel descending from above a longing for eternal bliss,
And you desire to leave the body's resting-place,
To muse without the shadow of a change upon My brightness,

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Enlarge your heart and take this holy inspiration with your whole desire.
Give great thanks unto the goodness from on high,
Which deals with you so condescendingly,
Visits you kindly, rouses you zealously, raises you mightily,
That by your weight you slip not back again to earth.
Not by your own thought or endeavour do you get it,
But merely by the condescension of the heavenly kindness and by God's looking on you,
That you may profit in the virtues and in greater lowliness,
And make you ready for the coming fight,
And try to cleave to Me with all your heart's affection,
And serve Me with a burning will.

II.

Nov. 22. My son,
The fire is often bright,
Yet without smoke the flame does not ascend;
So some men's longings burn unto celestial things,
And yet they are not free from the temptations of the flesh.
In asking things so zealously of God,
They do not always act with a pure motive for God's honour.

And this is often what the longing means,
Which you *said* would be so anxious.
That is not pure, that is not perfect,
Which has been stained with thoughts of your own profit.
Seek not what pleases you or profits you,
But what will be received by Me and honours Me;
For, think but rightly of it,
You ought to put My rule before your wishes, and before all you long for, and to follow it.

I know what you desire,
And I have heard your frequent groans.

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You would be now free as the glorious sons of God,
And now the eternal home delights you, and heaven your country, full of joy.
But that hour is not yet come;
There is some time yet;
A time of war, I mean, a time of toil, a time of proof.
Now you would be filled with what is best,
But you cannot get it in this way.*
I am He;
Wait for Me, saith the Lord, until My kingdom come.

You must be proved still on the earth,
And tried in much;
Comfort shall now and then be given you,
But fulness and abundance are not granted.
Be of good heart then: play the man
In action and in suffering nature's crosses.

Nov. 23. You must put the new man on you,
And change into another.
Often you must do the things you would not,
And leave the things you would.
What pleases others shall go well,
What pleases you shall not get on.
When others speak they shall be listened to,
What you say shall be held as nothing.
Others shall ask and get,
You shall ask and not succeed.
The names of others shall be loud upon men's lips,
Men shall be silent about you.
This or that business shall be put into another's hands,
You shall be judged of use for nothing.
For all this nature will sometimes get sad,—

* That is, by being discontented.

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It is a heavy burden
To carry silently.*
In these ways and the like the faithful servant of the Lord is often tried,
To see how far he can deny himself and break himself in all things.

Scarce is there anything in which you need to die so much,
As when you see and suffer things that cross your will;
And most of all when bidden to do what does not suit you, and seems useless to you.
And because, set under rule, you dare not say a word against the higher power,
You think it hard to move at some one's nod,
And put what *you* feel all aside.

Nov. 24. But if you think, My son, what fruit these toils will bring,
A quick end and a very great reward,
You will have no trouble from them,
But a great comfort for your patience.
For for this little bit of will you have now freely given,
You shall for ever have your will in heaven.
There shall you find all you wish,
All you can desire,
There at your hand shall be abundance of all good,
No fear of loss.
There shall your will be one with Mine,
And ask for nothing of its own apart from Me.
There no one shall resist you,
No one complain of you,
No one hinder you,
Nothing meet you in the way;

* Et magnum,
Si silens portaveris,

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But all you want shall there be present to you,
And shall refresh your longings and fill them to the full.
There will I give you glory for the scorn you suffered,
A cloak of praise for sorrow,
And for the lowest room a kingly seat for evermore.
There shall the fruit of an obedient life appear;
The toiling penitent shall then rejoice,
The lowly subject shall be gloriously crowned.

Bend then beneath the hands of all,
And let it be no care to you who speaks or who commands.
But greatly care for this,
That, be it prelate, junior, or equal who asks a thing from you by word or sign,
Take it all for good,
Try to fulfil it with real will.
One may seek this, one that;
One may boast here, another there,
And you may hear him praised a thousand thousand times.
Not in this—not in that—take your delight,
But in scorn of self,
And in what pleases Me and honours Me alone.
This be your wish,
That God be always glorified in you, whether by life or death.

CHAPTER L.

How desolate Man should put Himself into the Hands of God.

The Soul.

Nov. 25. LORD GOD, holy Father, now and for ever blessed,
Because Thy will is done,
And what Thou doest is good,

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Let Thy servant find his joy in Thee,
Not in himself, nor in another;
For Thou alone art my true joy,
My hope, my crown,
My delight, my honour, O my Lord.
What has Thy servant,
Save what he has from Thee, unmerited?
Thine is all that Thou hast given,
And all that Thou hast done.

From my youth up I am poor and in the midst of toils;
My soul is sometimes sorrowful to tears,
And sometimes greatly out of quiet because of passions hanging over it.
I long for joyful peace,
I want the peace of all Thy sons,
Fed by Thee in the light of consolation.
If Thou givest peace,
If Thou pourest on me holy joy,
Thy servant's soul shall be filled full of music,
And shall be pious in Thy praise.
But if Thou takest away Thy peace, as oft Thou dost,
His soul will not be able to run the way of Thy commandments.
His knees are bent: he smites his breast,
Because it is not for his soul to-day as it was yesterday or heretofore, when Thy lantern shone about his head,
And 'neath Thine overshadowing wings he was protected.

II.

Nov 26. Father, just and always to be praised,
The hour is come: Thy servant must be tried.
O Father lovable,

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Meet it is that even now Thy servant should endure something for Thee.
Father everlasting, reverend, the hour is coming, which Thou didst know from all eternity,
In which for a short time Thy servant must faint outwardly,
But ever inwardly live on to Thee;
For a while must be despised,
Humbled, and fallen before the eyes of man,
Bruised by passion and by weariness,
That once again with Thee he may arise
In the dawn of the new light,
And be made bright in heaven.

O Holy Father,
This is Thy will, Thy pleasure,
And all Thou didst ordain is come to pass.
This is Thy kindness to Thy friend,—
Suffering and tribulation in the world for love of Thee,
Whenever and from whom Thou willest it.
Without Thy counsel and Thy foresight,
And without cause, nothing is done on earth.
It is good for me, O Lord, that Thou didst humble me,
That I may learn Thy ways of justice,
And throw aside all heart-elation and presumption.
Good for me that confusion has overspread my face,
That I may ask Thee to console me, and not men.
I have learnt from this to dread Thy judgments which I cannot understand,
Thou that bruisest the righteous with the wicked,
But all with equity and justice.

Nov. 27. Thanks be to Thee that Thou didst not spare my evil ways,
But didst wear me down with bitter stripes,

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Bringing pain and agony on me within, without.
None there is of all the creatures under heaven that can
console me,
But Thee, O Lord my God, heavenly physician of the soul,
Who strikest deep and healest me,
Bringest me down to hell and raisest up again.
Thy training is over me,
Thy rod itself shall teach me.

See, loving Father, in Thine hands I am,
I bow beneath the rod of Thy correction.
Strike my back, my neck,
That I may bend my wayward steps unto Thy will.
Make me a good and humble follower as Thou wast wont
to do,
That I may walk quite at Thy nod.
I yield myself and all I have to Thee to be corrected;
Better to be punished now than afterwards.

Thou knowest all and each,
And nothing in the human conscience can escape Thee.
Before they are, Thou knowest what will come;
Need there is none that one should tell or warn Thee of
the things on earth.
Thou knowest what is best to help me on my way,
And what the use of trial is to clear the rust of sin.
Do with me according to Thy pleasure; it is mine;
My sinful life do not despise,
A life known unto none so well, so clearly as to Thee.

Nov. 28. Grant me, O Lord, to know what should be known,
To leave what should be left,
To praise what best likes Thee,
To think on all that seems of price to Thee,
And to blame all that in Thy sight is foul.

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Let me not judge according to the vision of the outward eyes,
Nor pass a judgment from the hearing of the unskilled ear of man,
But to distinguish with a judgment that is true
Between the things of sight and those of soul,
And above all to ask, ever to ask, what is the pleasure of Thy will.
Often the senses are deceived in judging.
The lovers of the present world are cheated,
Loving only what they see.
And why is man better for this,
In that he is thought great by man?
The cheater cheats the cheater while he praises him,
The vain the vain, the blind the blind, the weak the weak,
And truly pours confusion on him with his empty praise.
For "as each is in Thine eyes,"—
So says Saint Francis, lowly saint,—
"That he is worth—no more."

CHAPTER LI.

When we Fail in what is very Great, we must press on to Humbler Works.

God.

Nov. 29. MY son, you cannot always stand in humble longing for the virtues,
Nor rest upon the higher step of contemplation;
But you must now and then descend to lower things, because of your original corruption,
And, even with weariness, against your will carry the burden of a life that soon decays.
Long as you wear the mortal frame,

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You will feel weariness and heaviness of heart.
Therefore while in the flesh you often have to groan over its burden,
And that you cannot always cleave unto the studies of the spirit and your thoughts of God.

II.

Nov. 30. Then it is better for you to betake yourself to lowly and to outward works,
And to refresh yourself in doing good,
And, firmly confident, to wait for Me and for the visit from on high,
Bearing your exile and the desert of your mind with patience,
Till you again are visited by Me,
And freed from every care.
For I will make you to forget your toils,
And enjoy peace within.
Before you I will stretch the meadows of the Scriptures,
That with a swelling heart you may begin to run the way of My commandments;
And you shall say,
The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared
With the glory that shall be revealed in us.

CHAPTER LII.

Man should not think Himself Worthy of Comfort, but rather Worthy of Blows.

The Soul.

Dec. 1. LORD, I am not worthy of Thy comfort,
Nor of any visit from on high;
And thus Thou dealest justly with me,

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Leaving me desolate and helpless.
For could I weep tears like the sea,
I should not even so be worthy of Thy comfort.
So I am worthy of naught but to be scourged and punished,
Because I grievously and often have offended Thee,
And failed exceedingly in much.
Therefore, were the matter duly weighed,
I am not worth the smallest consolation.

But Thou, pitiful God and merciful, Who dost not wish Thy works to perish,
To show the riches of Thy goodness towards the vessels of Thy pity,
Even beyond all meriting of mine,
Thou deignest to console Thy servant
Beyond the ways of man.
Thy comfort
Is not like chattering human words.

Dec. 2. What have I done, O Lord,
That Thou shouldst give me any consolation from on high?
Truly I cannot think of any good,
But I am prone to vice,
Slow in improvement.
'Tis true,
And I cannot deny it.
Were I to say otherwise,
Thou wouldst stand against me,
And there would not be one to speak for me.
What have I merited for all my sins,
But hell and everlasting fire?
Indeed I know that I am worthy of all scorn and mockery,
And ought not to be named among Thy pious souls.
Though it be hard for me to hear it,

* Humanæ confabulationes.

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Yet for truth sake I will bring up my sins against myself,
That I may the easier win Thy pity.
What shall I, guilty, say,
Full of all confusion?
I have no lips to speak save this, save this alone,—
I have sinned, Lord, I have sinned.
Pity me, pardon me,
Let me for a space bewail my pain
Before I pass into the shadowy land, shrouded with the cloud of death.

II.

Dec. 3. What dost Thou first ask of one that is accused, a wretched sinner,
Save that he be bruised and humbled for his sins?
The hope of pardon has its birth in true contrition and in lowliness of heart;
The troubled conscience is there brought to peace,
Lost favour is regained,
The man is saved from coming wrath,
God and the penitent soul run and meet each other in a holy kiss.
A humble sorrow for one's sins
Is a sacrifice that Thou wilt take, O Lord,
Of a far sweeter savour in Thy sight than smoke of incense.
This is the pleasant ointment Thou didst wish poured on Thy sacred feet,
For Thou hast never scorned the humble and the contrite heart.
There is the place of refuge from before the anger of the enemy;
There the soul is bettered and washed clean,
However pressed or stained elsewhere.*

* Quidquid aliunde contractum est et inquinatum.

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CHAPTER LIII.

God's Grace does not go well with a Taste for Earthly Things.

God.

Dec. 4. MY son,
My grace is precious;
It will not mingle with the outer world,
Nor with the comforts of the earth.
Thus you must cast aside all things that hinder it,
If you would drink it in and make it part of you.*

Seek for yourself a secret spot,
Love to dwell lonely by yourself,
Ask for none to gossip with,
But rather pour your pious prayer to God,
That you may keep a saddened mind, a conscience pure.
Value all the world at nothing,
Put your quiet hour for God before all outside cares.
For you cannot find an hour for Me,
And take your pleasure too in what goes by.
You must get far away from what you know and love,
And keep your mind unto itself, barring out temporal solace.
Thus blessed Peter the apostle begs us,
That the faithful souls of Christ
Should hold themselves as pilgrims and as strangers here.

Dec. 5. How trustful will you be when death is nigh,
If love of nothing keeps you in the world.
But this—the keeping of the heart away from all—
Man's ailing mind is not yet trained to it,
Nor does the animal man know what the freedom is of the inward life.

* Si optas ejus infusionem suscipere.

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But if he really would be spiritual,
He must give up the near ones and the far,
Dreading no one more than self.

Win the battle o'er yourself,
And you will easily put the rest to rout.
It is a perfect victory,
This triumph over self.
The man who keeps himself in hand,—
Sense slave to reason,
Reason slave in all to Me,—
He is the victor of himself, lord of the world.

II.

And if in mounting to this height you slip,
Then like a man begin again, and put the axe unto the root;
Drag out and kill the hidden ill-ordered tendency,
That leads to self and to all selfish and material good.

On this one fault—that man seeks his own good too much—
Nigh every evil hangs,
That from its root must be subdued.
And this once beaten and conquered,
Great peace and quietness shall ever reign.
But as few try to die perfectly to self,
And never aim outside themselves,
Therefore they are entangled in the snares,
And cannot lift themselves above themselves in spirit.

The man who longs freely to walk with Me
Must kill all wicked and ill-reined affections,
And not cleave lustfully from selfish love to any creature.

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CHAPTER LIV.*

The Life of Man—Life touched by God—their Different Ways.

God.

Dec. 6. MY son, heed carefully the ways of man s life, and of life when touched by God;
They are quite contrary; they move so stealthily,
Their working scarce perceived,
Save by a spiritual man whose lantern shines within.
All seek the good.
In all they say, in all they do, men aim at something good,
And by what seems the good many are cheated.

II.

The life of man is cunning: it lures, it snares, it cheats;
Itself is its own end.
Life touched by God walks always on the simple path,
Turns from things that wear an evil face,
Makes for no false mark,
Does all for God in purity,
In Whom, as in an end, it rests.

Dec. 7. The life of man shuns death, shuns pressure, shuns defeat,
Would not be second,
Would not pass beneath a yoke.
Life touched by God aims at the humbling of self even to death,

* Throughout this chapter "natura" is taken as the "life of man," "gratia" as "life touched by God." This seems to bring the sense out better than the unmeaning theological transliteration of "nature" and "grace."

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Fights with self-indulgence,
Asks for subjection,
Wishes for defeat,
Cares not for its own liberty,
Loves to be bound by rule,
Likes not to domineer,
But ever under God
To live, to stand, to be;
And for His sake is ready humbly to bow down
To any human creature.

The life of man works for its own end,
And thinks, "What can I gain from some one else?"
Life touched by God cares not what serves or helps itself,
But what will help mankind.

The life of man is glad to be held high of men, and reverenced;
Life touched by God gives honestly to Him all glory and all honour.

Dec. 8. The life of man fears scorn and dreads a blush;
Life touched by God smiles at an insult for the name of Jesus.

The life of man loves rest and quiet for the body;
Life touched by God cannot be wasting time,
But hugs toil joyfully.

Dec. 9. The life of man runs after fair and curious things,
Shudders at the sordid and the gross;
Life touched by God is pleased with what is plain and simple,
Looks not roughly on the rough,
And does not mind wearing old rags.

The life of man is always looking on the things of time,
Pleased with the pelf of earth,

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Gloomy at loss,
Pricked by the least injurious word;
Life touched by God looks on the eternal,—
With it no cleaving unto time,
No frown when property is lost,
No sneer when words are harsh,—
Because it puts its treasure and its joy in heaven,
Where nothing fades.

The life of man is covetous, and gladly gets more than it gives,
Loving its own, its private store;
Life touched by God is good, ready to share,
Shuns "property," and is content with little,
Thinking it more blessed to give than to receive.

Dec. 10. The life of man turns to creation and to the flesh it loves,
To empty vanity and runnings here and there;
Life touched by God leads man to Him and to the virtues,
Gives up creation, shuns the world,
Hates the body's lusts,
Puts a bit on wandering fancies,*
Blushes to appear abroad.

The life of man is glad to get at comfort from without, to get a pleasure it can *feel;*
Life touched by God looks only unto Him for consolation,
For pleasure in the highest good, far above all that it can see.

The life of man does all for gain, for its own good,
Never does anything for nothing,
But longs to get an equal boon, perhaps a greater one,
Or praise and kindness for the good it does.
It wants its own deeds, gifts, and words to be thought much of in the scale.

* Restringit evagationes.

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Life touched by God seeks nothing temporal,
And asks, for pay, no other boon save God alone,
And wants no more of what is needful on the earth
Save just as much as leads the soul to follow the eternal aim.

Dec. 11. The life of man is glad of friends and kinsfolk,
Boasts of long ancestry and noble standing,
Smiles on the proud,
Fawns on the rich,
Claps those that do as it does.
Life touched by God loves—yes—its enemies;
No crowd of friends raises its pride;
Pride of place and birth are naught with it, save when greater worth goes with them.
It looks with kindlier eye upon the poor than on the rich;
Shows sympathy, not with the powerful, but with the harmless;
Smiles with the truth-lover, not with the liar;
Ever cheers on the good to try to get the better gifts,
And by their virtues to be like the Son of God.

The life of man soon grumbles over trouble and defeat;
Life touched by God bears want with constancy.

The life of man turns all things back to self,
And for itself it strives and quarrels;
Life touched by God brings all things back to Him from Whom at first they flow.
Giving no good unto itself, nor arrogantly presuming,
It quarrels not, and does not put its own opinions first,
But in all that has to do with sense and understanding
Bows to the eternal wisdom of the test of God.

Dec. 12. The life of man would know all secrets and would hear all news,

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Likes to be seen abroad and try what many things are like,
Longs for recognition and to do what brings it praise and admiration;
Life touched by God cares not to look on what is new and strange.
All that is new has sprung from old decay;
Nothing is new upon the earth; nothing can last.
Therefore it teaches man to rein the senses in,
To shun complacency and show,
To hide in humbleness what should be praised and wondered at,
In everything, in every branch of knowledge, to look for useful fruit,
And what brings praise and honour unto God;
Wishes no trumpeting of self or its own deeds;
God must be blessed in all His gifts, it says,
Who gives us all out of pure charity.

III.

This life is as a lamp passing the light of earth, a special gift of God,
And really a small sign to His elect, a pledge of their eternal safety.
It lifts man up from things of earth
To love the things of heaven,
Takes him from flesh and leads him to the soul.
The more, then, that the life of man is crushed and conquered,
The more the touch of God comes down on us;
And daily, as God's visits come, the inner man grows in his beauty once again like to the image of God.*

* Alluding to the saying of the Mystics, that man could get back again to the beauty of God, in Whose likeness he was made.

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CHAPTER LV.

*Nature's Corruption: the Power of the Influence Divine.**

Dec. 13. LORD GOD, Thou didst create me in Thine image and Thy likeness,
Grant me this influence from Thee which Thou hast shown to be so great, so needful for salvation,
That I may conquer my most wicked nature, which drags me down to ruin and to sin.
For in my flesh I feel the law of sin,
Warring against the mental law, and often leading me a captive to my sensual being.
I cannot stand against its passions,
If Thy most holy influence assist me not, poured like a flame upon my heart.

I need Thy favouring influence,† I need it much,
If nature is to be defeated,—
Nature, ever prone to evil from its youth:
For through Adam, the first man, it fell and was through sin befouled,
And to all men comes down the penalty for this first stain.
And nature's self, once fair and right as formed by Thee,

* *Gratia.* I shrink from using the word "grace" more than I can help; because it conveys little or no real meaning to people. Influence, favour, kindness, thanks, a touch from God, beauty, righteousness, power—these are a few of the meanings of the word. The writer uses it in very many senses, and consequently I make bold to translate it in many ways; but I have generally put the Latin words at the foot of the page.

† Gratia.

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Stands now for vice and for the weakness of a nature spoiled;*
Because its movement, left unto itself, drags men to evil and to lower things.
For the slight strength that still remained to it
Is as a spark hidden in ashes;
I mean, the natural reason, folded deep in darkness,
Still able to discern 'twixt good and evil,
Able to separate the true and false;
Though it cannot fulfil all it approves,
Though it possesses not the Truth's full light, nor its affections healthy as of old.

Thus it is, O my God, that in the inner man I am delighted with Thy law,
Knowing Thy bidding will be holy, just, and good;
And I condemn all evil and sin, things to be shunned,
Yet with my flesh I serve the law of sin,
Obedient to the senses, rather than to reason.

And thus it is that to will well is present in me,
But how to do it I cannot find.

And thus it is that I often lay a good plan down,
But as God's kindly influence is not there to help my weakness,
Upon a slight resistance I leap back, I fail.

And thus it is that though I know the way of perfect life,
And how I ought to act I see quite clearly,
Yet, crushed beneath the weight of my corruption,
I do not rise to a more perfect path.

* These words make plain what the writer means by "natura" here.

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II.

Dec. 14. O how much, how very much I need Thine influence, Lord,
To start upon a path of good,
To make way in it,
And to end the journey.
Without this influence I can do nothing;
But when it strengthens me I can do all.

O kindly influence, truly heavenly,
Apart from which we have no merits of our own,
Apart from which before Thee, Lord, no natural gifts have any weight,
Arts are nothing, riches nothing,
Beauty and strength are nothing,
Wit and eloquence are nothing,—
For they are shared by good and bad alike,—
But the gracious influence of love is the peculiar gift of Thine elect;
Wearing this mark, they are deemed worthy of eternal life.
So high it reaches,
That no gift of prophecy, no marvel-working, no deep discussions, be they what they may, are, without it, of any value;—
No, not even faith, nor hope,
Nor any other virtue,
Is, without it and charity, received by Thee.

III.

Dec. 15. O thrice blest influence of God that makes the poor in spirit rich in worth,
And makes the rich lord humble in heart,

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Come Thou, come down to me,
Fill me early with Thy consolation,
Lest my soul faint for very weariness and drought.

I pray Thee, Lord, that I may find favour before Thee;
Thy gracious favour is enough for me,
Though I gain not the other things that nature wants.
If I shall be tried and vexed with many tribulations,
I will fear no evil
While Thy favouring influence stays with me.
It is my strength,
It brings me aid and tells me what to do;
It is stronger than all foes,
Mistress of truth,
Teacher of discipline,
Light of the heart,
Solace in pressing times;
It puts to flight my sorrow,
It takes away my fear,
It nurses my devotion,
It makes my tears to flow.
Without it, what am I? A withered log,
A useless stump, to be cast forth.

Then let Thy favouring influence, Lord, ever go before and follow me,
And make me ever busy in good works,
Through Jesus Christ, Thy Son.
Amen.

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CHAPTER LVI.

We should Deny Ourselves and, by the Cross, Imitate Christ.

Jesus.

Dec. 16. MY son,
The more you can go out of self,
The more you can pass over into Me.
As freedom from a lust for outer things
Brings inner peace,
So giving up yourself within
Joins you to God.

I want you to learn more—pure self-denial,
Resting in My will *
Without a murmuring or complaining word.

Follow Me;
I am the way, the truth;
I am the life.

Without the way you cannot walk,
Without the truth you cannot know,
Without the life you cannot live.
I am the way you ought to follow,
The truth you ought to trust,
The life you ought to hope for.
I am the way that cannot harm you,†
The truth that cannot play you false,
The life that cannot end.

* In voluntate mea, "to my will," is quite a mistaken rendering. The Mystic taught that *perfect man and God are one;* cf. Book IV., chap. i., "I will hear what the Lord God will say *in me;* and cf. the teaching of the treatise everywhere.

† Ego sum via inviolabilis.

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I am the straitest way,
The highest truth,
The real, the blest, the uncreated life.
If you continue in My way you shall know truth,
And truth shall make you free,
And you shall grasp eternal life.

If you would enter into life,
Keep the commandments.
If you would know the truth,
Trust Me.
If you would be perfect,
Sell all.
If you would be My disciple,
Deny yourself.
If you would gain the blessed life,
Scorn that which passes by.
If you would rise high in heaven
Be lowly in the world,
If you would reign with Me,
Carry the Cross with Me;
For only servants of the Cross
Find out the road of true light and of bliss.

II.

The Soul.

Dec. 17. Lord Jesus, as Thy way was strait and by the world contemned,
Grant me to follow Thee, contempt and all.
The servant is no greater than his master,
Nor the disciple than his lord.

Let Thy life be Thy servant's task;*

* Exerceatur servus tuus in vita tua; that is, he is to ground his duties of life on the methods of Jesus.

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There is my safety,
There true sanctity;
Whatever else I read or hear,
Neither refreshes me nor gives me full delight.

III.

Jesus.

My son, you know all this, and you have read it all;
If you do it, blessed shall you be.
He that hath My commands and keepeth them,
He it is that loveth Me.
And I will love him too,
And show Myself to him,
And I will make him sit with Me in My Father's kingdom.

The Soul.

Lord Jesus, as Thy word is and Thy promise,
Let it be so to me,
And let it be my lot to gain it.
I took, I took the cross from Thee,
I will bear it, I will bear it to my death,
As Thou didst lay it on me.
It *is* a cross, a good monk's life,
But it leads on to Paradise.
I have begun;
There must be no going back,
No leaving it.

IV.

The Soul (*speaking to others*).

Dec. 18. Oho, my brothers, go we on together,
Jesus shall be one of us.
For Him we took this cross upon us,
For Him let us hold on.

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He will our helper be,
Our guide, our pioneer.
See. Stepping on before us goes our king,
To fight upon our side
Follow like men,—
No fear of terrors now;
Let us be ready to die valiantly in war;
Let not the charge that we desert the Cross *
Be brought against our glory.

CHAPTER LVII.

When Man slips into Faults, he must not be too much Cast Down.

God.

Dec 19. MY son,
Long suffering, lowliness in days of trouble, please Me more
Than piety in days of happiness and wealth of consolation.†

Why does a trifle spoken against you make you sad?
Had it been something more,
You ought not to have been so troubled.
But now: let it go by.
'Tis not the first; 'tis nothing new;
And, if you live long, 'twill not be the last.

Dec. 20. Oh you are man enough,
So long as nothing crosses you.

* Nec inferamus crimen gloriæ nostræ
Ut fugiamus a cruce.

Cf. Maccabees, i. 9, 10, and see margin, which gives the true meaning of the above passage.

† He means, by consolation, self-comfort; that is, self-satisfaction.

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You counsel others well; your words can make them strong as oak;
But when to *your* door flows a sudden wave of trial,
You fail in strength and counsel.
Think how very frail you are;
You find it over and again in meeting little crosses.
Yet they are for your health,
They and the like.

You know better,
Put it from your heart;
And if it touches you,
Let it not sadden you, nor long enfold you.
Bear it with joy,
If not, at least with patience.
Though you do not care to hear of it, are angry at it,
Repress yourself,
Suffer no excessive word to pass your lips whereby the little ones may stumble.
Soon will the wave of passion fall to rest,
And, when God's influence returns, the inward smart will turn to sweetness.
I live, saith the Lord,
Ready to help and comfort you more than My wont,
If you trust Me and truly call upon Me.

Dec. 21. Be more quiet then,
And gird yourself to stand still more.
All is not in vain,
If you find that you are often troubled, or tried grievously.
You are man—you are not God—
A thing of flesh,
No angel.
How could *you* always stay in the same state of virtue?
In this one of heaven's angels failed,

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And the first man in Paradise.
I am He that raises into safety them that mourn,
And those that know their weakness
I carry forward to My heavenly state.

II.

The Soul.

Lord, blessed be Thy word,
Sweeter to my lips than honey and the honeycomb.
In woes so great and in my anguish what were I to do
Didst Thou not strengthen me by holy words?
So long as I shall come at last to the safe haven,
What care I how I suffer, or how much?
Give me a good end,
Give me a happy passage from the world;
Think on me, O my God,
And lead me by the straight path to Thy kingdom.
Amen.

CHAPTER LVIII.

Higher Things of God and Secret Judgments are not to be Searched Out.

God.

Dec. 22. MY son,
See you dispute not of high matters and of God's hidden judgments,—
Why *he* is left so desolate,
Why *he* is put on such a pinnacle of favour,
Why *he* is so much tried,
Why *he* is lifted up so high;
These things are quite beyond the grasp of man.
No reason, no discussion, can avail to trace the footsteps of God's judgments.

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When then the enemy suggests these thoughts,
Or when some busy folk enquire,
Answer as the prophet did,
"Thou art just, O Lord,
Thy judgments true."
And yet again,
"The judgments of the Lord are true,
Justified to themselves."

My judgments must be feared,
Not taken to pieces;
They are not to be understood by human intellect.

Dec. 23. Then do not ask,
Nor quarrel o'er the merits of the saints,
Which is holier than the other,
Or which is greater in the realms of heaven.
Such things breed strifes and useless quarrels,
They nurse pride and vainglory, and envy and discussion follow in their train;
While one man proudly tries to exalt this saint,
And one another.
The wish to know all this, and track it out, brings you no profit,
But rather makes saints sorry.
For I am not a God of quarrels, but of peace.
This peace lies rather in humility
Than in exalting self.

Dec. 24. Some are attracted with a zealous love and greater feeling to this saint or to that,
But this love is of man, and not of God.
I am He that made all saints;
I gave them My good influence,
I showed them glory,

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I know what each deserves,
I went before them in the blessings of My sweetness,
I knew before the ages who My loved ones were;
I chose them from the world,
They chose not Me.
I called them by My favour,
I drew them by My pity,
I led them on through many a temptation,
I poured upon them wondrous consolations,
I gave them strength unto the end,
I crowned their suffering,
I know them first and last,
I throw My arms, with love past telling, round them.
I must be praised in all My saints,
I must be blessed past all, honoured in each of them,
Whom I made so gloriously great, whom I predestined; they had no merit of their own.
He then who scorns one of My little ones,
Pays no honour to the great;
For I made weak and great;
And he who robs one saint of anything,
Robs Me of it, and all the rest in heaven.
All are one by the bond of charity.
They feel the same, they think the same;
They love each other as one,
And, what is higher far,
They love Me more than self or any merit of their own.
For they are rapt out of themselves, and drawn away from their own love,
Hastening all to Mine,
In which they rest with joy.
Nothing can turn their looks away, nothing depress them;
For they are full of everlasting truth,
And glow with fire of charity not to be quenched.

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Dec. 25. Then silent be the wrangling of all fleshly animal men about the state of saints;
Men know not how to love aught but their own delight.
They take away and add just as they please,
Not as it pleases the everlasting truth.
In many there is ignorance,
And above all in those who, dimly enlightened,
Cannot love any with a perfect spiritual love.
Now they are greatly drawn by natural affection and by human friendship to these men or to those,
And, as they find things here on earth,
So they think it is with things of heaven;
But far, incomparably far,
Are their imperfect thoughts
From the sights seen by those whose eyes are brightened by the revelation from on high.

II.

Dec. 26. See then, My son, that you do not curiously handle the things beyond your knowledge,
But rather think on this, make this your care,
That you be found there in God's kingdom, though you be but the least.
Even though a man should know who is the holier or the greater there,
What would the knowledge profit him,
Unless this made him humbler before Me, and raised him up unto the greater glory of My name?
Far more acceptable to God is he
Who thinks upon the greatness of his sins, the smallness of his virtues,
How far he is away from the perfection of the saints,
Than he who talks about their greatness or their littleness.
Better to pray unto the saints with pious prayers and tears,

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And with a humble mind to ask their glorious suffrages,
Than to dig deep into their secrets in a vain inquiry.

The saints are very well content,
If men would learn contentment, and stop their empty talk.
They boast not of their merits,
For they ascribe no goodness to themselves, but all to Me;
For I have given them everything from My unending charity.
So greatly are they filled with love of My divinity, and with a joy passing all bounds,
That there is nothing lacking to their glory,
No happiness they want.
The higher that they all are in the glory,
The deeper is their own humility,
The nearer and the dearer are they unto Me
And thus you have it written,
That they put down their crowns before the Lord, and fell upon their faces in the presence of the Lamb,
And worshipped Him that liveth for the ages.

III.

Dec. 27. Many ask who is greater in God's kingdom,
Who know not whether they are worthy to be compared unto the least.
It is a great thing to be even the least in heaven,
Where all are great,
For all shall be called sons of God, and shall be so.
The smallest shall be as a thousand,
And a sinner of a hundred years shall die.*
For when Christ's followers asked who was the greater in the kingdom,
This was the answer:

* That is, shall die a sinner.

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"Unless ye be converted and become as little children,
Ye shall not enter there.
Whoever therefore humbles self as does a little child,
He is the greater in the kingdom of heaven."

Dec. 28. Woe unto those who scorn freely to lower themselves with little children;
The low door of the heavenly kingdom will not let them in.
Ay, and woe unto the rich
Who get their comfort here;
For, when the poor go through the gate,
They shall stand without and wail.

Rejoice, ye humble,
And exult, ye poor;
God's kingdom yours,
If ye but walk in truth.

CHAPTER LIX.

All Hope, all Trust, is to be fixed Alone on God.

Dec. 29. WHAT is the trust, O Lord, I have in life,
Or what my greatest comfort in all I see beneath the sky?
Is it not Thou, Lord God,
Whose mercy none can tell?
Where was it well with me apart from Thee,
Or when could it be ill when Thou art near?
Rather would I be poor for Thee,
Than rich without Thee.
I choose to wander with Thee on the earth,
Rather than gain heaven without Thee.
Where Thou art is heaven,
And, where Thou art not,
Death and hell.

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Thou art my longing,
And therefore I must moan for Thee, and cry, and pray.
In no one can I fully trust
To help me in my needs when most I want it,
Save in Thee, my God, alone.
Thou art my hope, my trust,
My comforter, my faithful friend in all.

Dec. 30. All seek their own,
Thou only aimest at my safety and my good,
And turnest all to blessing for me.
Though Thou expose me unto many a cross and trial,
This Thou ordainest to my use,
And in a thousand ways art wont to prove Thy loved ones;
In the which proof Thou shouldst not less be praised and loved
Than if Thou wert to fill me with the heavenly consolation.
Therefore in Thee, Lord God, I put my hope and refuge,
On Thee I lay my trouble and my care,
For I find all weak, unsteady,
That I see apart from Thee.

Numbers of friends will help me not,
Brave comrades cannot aid me,
Wise counsellors can give no useful answer,
Learned books yield no comfort,
No precious substance can deliver me,
No pleasant and no secret place can save me,
If Thou aid not, comfort, console, instruct, and guard.
For all that seems to lead to peace and happiness
Is nothing without Thee,
And truly brings no jot of happiness.
Therefore Thou art the end of every good, the pinnacle of life,
The depth of eloquence;

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And to hope in Thee past all
Is Thy servant's strongest solace.
To Thee my eyes are turned,
In Thee I trust, my God, Father of mercies.

II.

Dec. 31. Bless and sanctify my soul with blessing from above,
That it may be Thy holy dwelling-place, the home of Thine eternal glory,
And that nothing may be found within the temple of Thy condescension *
Offending Thy majestic gaze.
According to the greatness of Thy mercies look on me,
And hear the prayer of Thy poor servant so long an exile in the region of death's shadow.
Guard, save Thy servant's soul amid the many dangers of a life that soon decays,
And with Thy favouring influence to keep him company, guide him along the road of peace unto his native country of everlasting light.
Amen.

Finished and completed in the year of Our Lord MCCCCXLI, by the hand of Brother Thomas Kempis, in Mount S. Agnes, near Zwolle.†

* That is, the soul of man.

† These words are not a colophon to the book, but are added at the end of the 1441 Codex.

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